

**HILL  
OF THE  
ROOSTER**

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# HILL OF THE ROOSTER

Curry Holden

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To Fran and Jane

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This story and its characters are fictional, but its grim background is true. The major episodes and many incidents can be documented. Liberties have been taken with time and space, but the portrayal of the age-old struggle for their land and tribal integrity by the Yaqui Indians is factual.

The ultimate absorption of the Indians in Mexico, as in the United States, is perhaps inevitable, but the dogged, courageous, and at times ill-advised resistance of the Yaquis has few parallels in history.

The pronunciation of the names Teta and Chepa should be Tātah and Chāpah, using the long ā.

## CHAPTER 1

1904

BROWN, arid hills rolled away from the green fields and fragrant orange groves in the valley of the winding Río Sonora. Brown, flat adobe houses rose from the clay of the hills and spread along the streets of Hermosillo. An accelerating early-fall wind stirred up swirls of dust in the streets leading to the Mexican military headquarters. Gusts of dust-laden air blew through the window into the dim, cool interior of the General's office in the massive adobe fortress at the edge of the town.

General Flores, wiping his gray mustache, set his coffee cup on the bare wooden table.

"José," he called, his voice resonant and commanding. The orderly came from the patio.

"Tell the cook to bring my breakfast."

"Yes, my General, he waits with it at the door. With your permission he will serve you."

"Yes. Bring it in."

"If you will permit me, my General, Captain Ramos has

returned with his company. He wishes to speak with you at your convenience."

"Tell him to come in."

Captain Ramos entered, and the General arose with instinctive courtesy to shake hands. The two men regarded each other with mutual respect. The General, stocky without corpulence, stood well back on his heels with an air of dignity. The Captain stood poised and restrained. He was tall, lean, and weathered by the Sonora sun. His clothes were dusty and travel-worn, but his black mustache was waxed to the proper points.

"Come, Captain, and breakfast with me."

"Many thanks, sir, but I ate early with the troops."

"Then please be seated and have coffee. We will talk while I eat."

The Captain sat at the opposite end of the table.

"How did it go with your expedition?" the General asked.

"Fairly well, sir. We returned with forty Yaqui Indians."

"How many men?"

"Six."

"Where did you capture them?"

"Two men, five women, and nine children were taken at the Rancho Prieta, two days' march to the southeast; four men, nine women, and eleven children were at the Rancho Pimas, a day's march beyond Prieta."

"To what villages do they belong?" the General inquired.

"They do not talk, sir, but we believe those from Prieta are from Torim, and the ones we took at Pimas are from Vicam."

"How long had those at Prieta been there?" asked the General.

"The *patrón* said they came asking for work about six months ago."

"Was their work satisfactory?"

"Yes. The *patrón* said they were good workers."

"How long had the others been at Rancho Pimas?"

"About a year, and they, too, gave satisfaction."

"Where are the prisoners now?"

"Outside, in the patio."

The General was silent for a moment. From under lowered eyelids he looked through the window. The clear, bright light of the Sonora desert was turning the jagged mountain range on the eastern horizon into a metallic-blue silhouette.

The Captain, sipping his coffee, was sensitive to the situation and knew that the fate of forty people was being decided. He studied the General's features, searching for a clue to his thoughts. The expression on the commandant's face was amicable but stern. The scholarly mien of his countenance was accentuated by a shock of iron-gray hair.

The General turned slowly toward the Captain. He started to take a bite of rolled *tortilla*, but paused with his hand in mid-air.

"Take all the men under sixty and the boys over twelve to the stockade and hold them for deportation."

"Yes, my General. There is one old man in the group. What should we do with him?"

"Hang him."

"But, sir, he is too old to fight any more. Could we not let him go?"

"Captain, you underestimate the power of old Yaqui men with their people. This one could become, if he is not already, an agitator and troublemaker."

"The women and children, sir. What do we do with them?"

"All the married women are to be hanged."

"But, sir, is that not most drastic? Could we not deport them to Yucatan with their men?"

The General emptied his cup and called to José to bring more coffee.

"No, Captain, that cannot be done unless you and I want to lose our commands. The Government has determined to carry out a policy of complete and thorough subjugation of the Yaqui race. The rich lands of the Rio Yaqui Valley and the minerals in the Bacatete Mountains can never be developed until the Yaquis have been scattered and absorbed or exterminated. When the Yaquis are removed, these lands can be colonized by worthy Mexicans and Americans who will bring peace and security to the region. If we permit the women to go with their men, they will only propagate more Yaquis who will preserve the tradition of resistance. The quickest way to achieve the policy of the Government is to do away with the married women."

"But, my General, does it not seem unfair to let the men live, and kill the women?"

"It is only a matter of time and degree, Captain. The men will go to the henequen plantations of Yucatan and Quintana Roo, where there are many tropical diseases to which the Yaquis are not accustomed. Most of them will not last long—two, three, maybe five years. The few who survive will marry Mexican women, and their children will be raised according to the Mexican tradition."

"What about the children in this group, sir?"

"Those under twelve will be placed with deserving Mexican families. They will forget the customs of the tribe

and will learn the Spanish language. The boys will become vaqueros, farmers, and workers on the railroad; they will marry Mexican women. When the girls grow up, they will marry Mexican men. In this way both boys and girls will be absorbed."

"Sir, there are several unmarried girls over twelve in the group."

"Give them to our soldiers to become their *mujeres*," said the General. "Let the soldiers select them according to rank, with the sergeants having first choice, the corporals next, and so on."

"My General, this is an unpleasant task which you have ordered. I fervently wish I were not the one to carry it out."

"Captain, you and I cannot permit ourselves any feelings in the matter. The President's orders are clear and explicit."

"Sir, cannot some allowance be made for the fact that these Yaquis were not in a state of rebellion? They were working peacefully and gainfully on the ranches. To the knowledge of their employers they have not committed any crimes nor broken any laws."

"So it would seem, Captain, but those who are peaceful workers this year will be back in the mountains next year, raiding and depredating. Those now in the mountains giving vent to their rebellious natures may, next year, be working quietly and satisfactorily on the ranches and in the towns. Furthermore, the tame Yaquis are always secretly sending provisions to the mountain Yaquis, who could not exist without such help. Wild or tame, so far as the Yaqui problem is concerned, it matters little. Our Government is convinced that only extermination and deportation will solve it."

The Captain said, "There is one other matter, sir. Three of the Yaqui women are nursing babies."

"That is regrettable, Captain. It is not likely that anyone can be found to take the babies. You had better kill them."

"As you direct, sir, but I can find no enthusiasm for it."

The Captain went out of the room, and the General finished his breakfast.

The *cuartel*, on the edge of Hermosillo, was a rectangular structure as large as a city block, with brown earthen walls which were thick and high. Each of the four sides contained a single tier of rooms, leaving an open area in the center as a patio and parade ground. The only green plant in the patio was a huge cottonwood tree. Access to the patio and all the rooms facing it was through a great wooden gate in the east wall. On either side of the gate and across the front were the quarters of the officers. At the sides and back were the stall-like rooms of the soldiers and their families. No common mess hall was provided for either officers or soldiers; each man's *mujer* cooked his food on a charcoal brazier, or over an open fire in the patio. The little fires of aromatic mesquite wood, the sweating, dirty bodies of people, the offal and waste swept into corners of the compound, combined into an odor which permeated the thick adobe bricks, and the scouring rays of a desert sun could not dispel it.

The Yaqui prisoners were huddled in two groups under the cottonwood tree, those from the Rancho Prieta in one cluster and those from Rancho Pimas in another. Covered with sweat and dust, weary, footsore, and ragged, the women were sitting flat on the ground with their faded gray *rebozos* pulled low over their foreheads. Two mothers were nursing their babies. A third, a comely woman,

was holding her baby asleep in her lap. The women's faces, though haggard and drawn, were impassive. Only their eyes revealed apprehension and fear, shifting constantly to their men, the children, the soldiers who surrounded them, and to the high adobe walls beyond. The bedraggled, hungry children were collected around their mothers or asleep on the ground. The men, with the exception of the old one, were standing, alert, suspicious, stolid, seeing everything without apparently seeing anything. Their weather-beaten clothing, from their battered straw hats to their torn, faded denim trousers and cracked *huaraches*, evidenced the effect of the heat, the thorns, and the poverty of the desert. Yet these men retained their dignity and spirit of defiance.

When Captain Ramos came from the General's quarters, he paused and looked at the Yaquis, conscious for the moment that he stood as one human being regarding other human beings without rancor or prejudice. Several moments passed before he began, subconsciously, to build his own defenses. "You and I cannot permit ourselves any feelings in the matter," the General had said.

"You are a soldier," he thought. "You have sworn to carry out orders, not question them. The Government says there is no other way. This is no time for softness, let us be done with it."

The Captain called a lieutenant to him.

"Lieutenant, it is the order of the General that all the Yaqui men, except the old one, be taken to the deportation stockade. Take fifty men, escort the prisoners to the stockade, and return here with the troops. Also, send to the stables for fifteen *reatas*."

The soldiers, with rifles at the ready and bayonets fixed, closed in on the Yaqui men and prodded them toward the



gate like so many cattle in a roundup. The men had heard of the deportation policy of the Government and had expected such a thing would happen. As they moved away, they gave brief farewell glances at their women and children. The women watched them go with silent weeping. The children, puzzled and mystified, huddled closer to their mothers. They sensed the tension and anxiety of the women, and began to fidget and move about, casting quick glances at the soldiers. As time passed and no rifle fire was heard, the women relaxed cautiously, but no indication of their feelings was apparent except the mist in their eyes.

The gate opened and the lieutenant's troop came back. Captain Ramos issued orders, and soldiers formed a tight circle around the women and children. A corporal and several soldiers approached one of the older women who had a suckling child. The corporal snatched the baby, while the soldiers stepped between him and the mother. He walked to the trunk of the tree, held the baby by its feet, gave a wide horizontal swing, and struck the base of the child's skull against the tree. The baby quivered and was dead.

It all happened so quickly the mother was benumbed and momentarily petrified. When she comprehended, she sprang at the corporal, clawing, scratching, biting, and striking. In her hate and fury she would have strangled him had not the soldiers moved in from behind, pinioning her arms. Still she kicked furiously until her ankles were tied. In the violence of the struggle her only upper garment, a loose-fitting blouse, was completely torn from her.

The lieutenant shouted, "Hang her now!"

A rawhide rope with a slip knot was placed around her neck, and she was swung from a limb of the cottonwood tree.

The soldiers approached the other two women who had babies. The mothers now realized what this meant, and each fought with all the fury of a female protecting her young, but to no purpose. The babies' heads were broken and their bodies thrown to the base of the tree. The mothers, scratched, bruised, half naked, and trussed, were swung beside the first woman. Soon the eleven other women and the old man were dangling from the several lower branches of the tree.

Death came to the victims slowly. It was a matter of strangulation. The bodies swung, twitched, twisted. Milk ran from the large, full breasts of the mothers of the murdered babies. There had been no outcries, from the women or the old man, other than those of rage. At length the bodies hung quiet, motionless, inert, with swollen faces and bulging eyes.

Meanwhile the children and the unmarried girls were herded closely together at one side of the tree. When it was evident the women and the old man were dead, Captain Ramos approached the group and appraised each of the larger girls. There were five who looked old enough to become slave wives, *soldaderas*, of the soldiers. These were dragged out by the soldiers and carried away.

Captain Ramos then became aware of a boy in the group. He was standing as one in a trance, hypnotized, staring toward the woman who had been hanged first. His jaw was set, his fists clenched, every muscle and nerve taut and strained. His color was blanched, his eyes moist, but he made no sound. His mother had ceased to struggle and the milk had stopped dripping from her breasts.

The Captain laid a hand on the boy's shoulder and said, "Your mother?"

The child did not move, but the Captain knew it was so. The Captain then said, "Your father?"

Again the boy said nothing and outwardly remained as one frozen. But some inward impulse, conducted through his being to the hand of the Captain, conveyed the thought that the boy's father was among those sent to prison.

The Captain called to his lieutenant, "This boy is large enough to work. Send him to the stockade with the men."

Soldiers led the boy away, and the Captain watched the gates close behind him.

In the meantime a girl had slipped from the group and gone unobserved to the base of the tree, where she picked up one of the dead babies. She held it fiercely to her chest and walked a few steps toward one of the women hanging from the tree. With clenched teeth and blazing eyes, she said in an undertone, "Mother of God, I will kill them all for this."

She was still standing holding her dead brother and looking intently at her mother when the Captain saw her. He started forward, but stopped to look at her. She was slender, wiry, tough, and small for her age, which he decided was about ten. She wore a single sliplike garment, dirty and torn. Her feet were bare; her hair hung loose and matted. Her face held him. It glowed with a fanatical radiance, a mingling of zeal, fortitude, determination, devotion, and hatred. "Three hundred years of Yaqui defiance in one small face," he thought.

As gently as he could, he took the baby from her. Then she looked at him for the first time. Her stare went slowly from his head to his feet then back again; her expression never changed.

"What is your name, child?"

"Chepa."

Again she glared at him intently, as though she wanted

to memorize every detail of his appearance; then she turned and went back to the group.

The Captain directed that the children be taken to the compound where other children were being held pending "adoption" by Mexicans. They were huddled together, terrified by what they had seen. Only Chepa did not cry.

In the days that followed, other groups of Yaquis were brought to the *cuartel* at Hermosillo. Singly, in pairs, or by the score, they were surrounded and captured in the mountains or on the ranches and the *haciendas* of Sonora. Able-bodied men who were not known leaders in Yaqui resistance were sent to the stockade to await deportation to Yucatan or Isla María, an island in the Pacific, two hundred miles southeast of the tip of Lower California. Known leaders were shot or hanged. Many women were hanged, a few were deported, the larger girls were given to the soldiers, and the children were held for "adoption."

The stockade became crowded as the time came to send the prisoners to Guaymas, where they would be shipped by sea. A train was made ready, a flatcar spaced between each boxcar.

On the day of departure the Yaquis were taken from the stockade in groups of thirty and marched to the train, guarded by two hundred Mexican soldiers with fixed bayonets. As they moved along, the Yaquis were an island surrounded by Mexicans, the Yaqui island a head taller than the encircling Mexican soldiery.

In this November of 1904 each Yaqui contingent was put into a boxcar and the doors were locked. When the men were loaded, eight boxcars were filled. Mexican troops then swarmed on top of the boxcars and the flatcars between. A thousand soldiers were sent to escort less

than a fourth that number of Yaquis. The General was concerned that every Yaqui man reach the henequen plantations of Yucatan. For each one delivered to the *haciendas* he would receive a sizable bounty. *La mordida*, "the bite," had far-reaching tentacles.

Only one Yaqui of the trainload ever returned. Where most of them died or were killed, no one on the Rio Yaqui ever knew.

Each day people came to the compound to inspect and examine the Yaqui children with the view of "adoption." The waifs were treated like so many puppies, from which the Mexicans made selections. *Hacendados*, *rancheros*, townspeople, sometimes accompanied by their wives, passed among the children, running their hands over the small bodies in search of deformities, removing their scant clothing to look for skin infections, and examining their eyes for optical diseases. They discussed with one another the merits of this child as compared to that one, the criteria always being how strong or sturdy it would become and whether its disposition would be energetic or lazy, docile and subservient, or arrogant and stubborn.

Don Pablo and Doña Ana, *hacendados*, went from one child to another, examining, comparing and considering. Behind them came the sergeant in charge of the compound. Don Pablo scrutinized every boy above the age of four. Then he made the rounds a second time, checking his first appraisal. At last he selected two boys, one six and one eight.

"I will take these two," he told the sergeant.

"But wait," said Doña Ana, "I need another girl in the kitchen. Julia has the fever and Josefina is getting old."

She continued her appraisal of the older girls.

"I think I will take this one."

To the child she said, "What is your name?"

"Chepa."

"All right," said Don Pablo to the sergeant. "Bring them on, all three of them. Now we will go sign the papers."

The sergeant said, "It is not necessary, *señor*. There are no formalities except, of course, a consideration for the General."

The same day, Don Pablo left for his *hacienda* with his entourage, a heavy wagon with supplies, and a carriage for Doña Ana, escorted by a score of armed vaqueros. He traveled two days northeast to Ures, where he arranged for a troop of Mexican cavalry to augment his own guard across the mountains to the Rio Moctezuma, three days east of Ures. Yaquis were known to be raiding in that region.

The party arrived at the *hacienda* without incident, the troop was sent back, and the daily routine of the cattle ranch went on.

Chepa was put to work in the kitchen. She learned quickly, performed her tasks efficiently, and never talked except to answer questions. Had anyone observed her closely, he would have noticed that she constantly sought to learn more of her surroundings. As occasions permitted, she explored and made a mental plot of the house with its enclosed patio, thick adobe walls with portholes in all directions, its heavy doors and gates. When sent on errands she frequently went farther than the errand required. Under the pretext of looking for eggs, she learned the size of the corrals and where the various animals were kept. She studied the trails and roads which led away in all directions, and gave particular attention to the mountains to the southwest of the *hacienda*, noting the peaks,



the canyons, and the high tablelands. She noted especially the places where she thought water might be found. Don Pablo had a pack of dogs of various sizes, shapes, and colors; some were friendly, and some were ugly and snarl-ish. She made friends with the dogs, concentrating on the ones with the worst dispositions. She took note of the daily routines of Don Pablo, the vaqueros, and the fieldworkers. She learned that at night armed guards kept watch, patrolling the area of the house, the corrals, and the bed grounds of cattle and horses. She found that the guards were changed every two hours and that two were on duty at a time.

After a month the cook told Chepa that henceforth it would be her duty to carry coffee to Doña Ana each morning before the lady got out of bed. The first time she went along the hall leading to Doña Ana's bedroom, she passed the arsenal of the *hacienda*, a long rack with thirty or more rifles, each standing in its notch. At the end of the rack were many boxes of cartridges. Chepa walked by the gun rack very slowly, looking quickly at each weapon. When she returned from Doña Ana's room, she again appraised the rifles and the ammunition, stacked on a shelf.

A gun was the one mechanical device she knew. Her father, grandfathers, and uncles had each had a rifle, the most cherished possession of a Yaqui man. The year before, when she had gone with her family to Arizona on an expedition to get ammunition, her uncle had let her shoot his rifle a number of times. Ammunition was expendable in Arizona, where it could be purchased, but never was it wasted on target practice in Sonora. Since she could remember, she had heard the men in the mountains discussing guns, their makes, their calibers, and their merits.

Early each morning, when no one was in the hall, she

studied the weapons, stopping occasionally to lift one gently and feel its weight and balance. The guns were of various makes and sizes and the one which attracted her most was a small, light 30-30 Winchester. One morning she risked detection long enough to put the piece to her shoulder and look down the sights. She could not read the labels on the cartridge boxes, but she knew by experience the kind of cartridge this gun used. Furtively she checked the ammunition boxes; there were perhaps a hundred rounds of the proper size.

Her agile mind formed a plan which she patiently carried out. She found a dry gourd and converted it into a water canteen which could be carried by a string. Each day a few *tortillas* were taken from the kitchen and hidden in the blanket which had been provided for her cover. At night, while the other servants slept nearby on *petates*, their woven sleeping mats, she slipped out to spy on the guards and check the gates. The latter were bolted at night from within, and any attempt to unbolt them would make sufficient noise to create a commotion.

One night she found a small gate which had been closed but not bolted. She pulled gently, and it opened with little noise. She got her blanket, canteen, and *tortillas* and put them beside the gate; then she tiptoed into the hall for rifle and ammunition. She had memorized every detail of the portal, the hall, and the arsenal. Returning to the gate, she made a sack of the blanket and put into it the *tortillas* and the cartridges. Swinging the canteen from her shoulder, taking the rifle in her hand, and speaking softly to the aroused dogs, she disappeared into the darkness.

Two days later, while she was resting behind a rock high up on the slope of a mountain, she spied a horseman riding up a draw near at hand. She flattened out on her

stomach, drew a bead on the man, and waited. As he advanced, it was obvious the rider was not looking for her, but for cattle. He was in range, now, and she recognized Don Pablo. Her expression did not change; she only waited until the horse raised his head and pointed his ears in her direction. She pulled the trigger; Don Pablo never knew from where the shot came. The vaqueros found him next day when vultures began circling overhead.

Chepa vanished without a trace.

## CHAPTER 2

1917

THE north prong of the Rio Yaqui has its source in the United States, high in the Chiricahua Mountains of southeastern Arizona, where it is called Whitewater Draw. It crosses the international boundary into Mexico at Douglas and becomes the Agua Prieta, or Black Water. It flows south through arid, mountainous ranching country for three hundred miles until it bends west and meanders in a leisurely fashion across the low, flat coastal plain of Sonora into the Gulf of California. Like a street in Mexico City, it changes its name without warning as it progresses. The Agua Prieta becomes the Rio Nacozari, and then the Rio Moctezuma. About halfway from the Arizona border to the Gulf, the Moctezuma joins the eastern prong, which has its beginning in the Sierra Madre of Chihuahua, and the two become the Rio Yaqui, a lusty, vitalizing desert river.

In the lower valley, where the river flows from east to west, are the eight traditional villages of the Yaqui tribe:

Cocorit, Bacum, Torim, Vicam, Potam, Rahum, Huirivis, and Belem. From the base of the Bacatete Mountains on the north, across the valley to the Gulf on the south, the land lies horizontal, alluvial, sandy and dry, covered with a jungle of desert vegetation which obtains its moisture from the humid air above as well as from the sandy soil beneath. The flatness of the plain is broken at rare intervals by small, steep hills, vestigial volcanic bubbles, stark, bare, and abrupt. From these eminences, or from any place where one can look over the level expanse of thorny vegetation, the escarpments of the Bacatete Mountains loom austere, bleak, and forbidding to the north, and the ridges of the Sierra Bojinuaqueme, softened in color and texture by distance, recede toward the east. Standing on the flat valley floor, one feels enveloped by the intimacy of the vigorous growth.

The young man paused when he reached the edge of the desert clearing. He saw no one, but could hear voices within a Yaqui compound which was in the center of the open ground. He stood, hidden by a *pitaya*, an organ-pipe cactus, inhaling a faint odor of boiling coffee. Smoke, which he smelled rather than saw, rose from the enclosure.

The side of the house compound which he could see had two rooms with an open space between. A fence of mesquite posts and *carrizo*, a bamboolike cane, was woven between the two rooms. In the fence was a gate.

He heard a commotion within the compound. A dog wailed and whined, a barrage of childish insults followed; then the dog came slinking through the open gate, followed by a girl who was whaling him with a *carrizo* stick. The child went back into the compound. The dog, with a pointed head and a more pointed tail, his shriveled hide

stretched taut over a dry skeleton, stopped and slunk back through the gate.

The young man turned as a voice behind him said in Spanish, "Who are you?"

He faced an older man holding a rifle. The gun was not aimed at him, but was held on the alert; its bearer wore a straw hat of wide brim and low-peaked crown, a faded, patched blue shirt, faded denim trousers, and leather sandal *huaraches* which were held to the front of the foot with a single thong passing between the big toe and the second toe. At his waist he wore a cartridge belt on the side of which was a holster containing a revolver of American make. The belt was filled with .45-caliber cartridges. Crossing his chest were two other cartridge belts, one hanging from each shoulder, both filled with 30-30 Winchester cartridges. From behind his left hip could be seen the handle of a knife.

The man was middle-aged and of stocky build. He had powerful shoulders and a small waist. His skin was dark chocolate in color, and deep lines ran from above the base of his nose to either side of a wide, firm mouth. His steady, coal-tar eyes were slanted and the lids drooped slightly.

"I am called Teta," the young man said in Yaqui.

"You speak Yaqui. Where did you learn it?"

"Here, in Torim."

"I never saw you before."

"I had but few years, perhaps four, when I left here."

The older man still looked at Teta sternly and with suspicion. He again regarded the newcomer from head to foot, noting the difference in his apparel from that worn locally: a straw hat of soft texture, with the turned-up brim and the high crown typical of southern Mexico, white unbleached cotton *manta* shirt and trousers, both

torn and dirty, and *huaraches* with wide bands across the instep and the toes and with thick leather soles.

In his late twenties, Teta was not so heavy as the older man and was taller, with a good hard physique. His long copper-colored face had high, wide cheekbones, a full mouth, and a strong chin. A scar on the left side of his face had healed in such a way as to cause the wrinkles on his left temple to turn up slightly, giving the perpetual impression that he was about to smile. He stood lightly poised and erect. A Mauser rifle swung by its strap over one shoulder, a rolled, dark blue blanket over the other; a cartridge belt completed his belongings.

"Where have you been since then?" asked the older man.

"In the Bacatete Mountains until I was ten," he said, with a scarcely perceptible motion of his head toward the north.

"And after that?"

"In Yucatan and Quintana Roo."

"Who was your father?"

"Juan Valencia."

The older man relaxed. The hard, stern set of his countenance gave way to a smile that was engaging and warm.

"Ah, Juan Valencia's boy. I remember you now. I am your godfather. Let us go to my house. There will be food."

Teta said, "How are you called?"

"Avalardo."

"You are an official of the village?" asked Teta, impressed by Avalardo's dignified bearing.

"Yes. I am the Governor since last month."

Avalardo led the way across the clearing. The ground was covered with a layer of fine, powdery dust. With each

step a little cloud squished up overfoot. Not a weed, a blade of grass, nor any seasonal plant was evident. Around the edge of the clearing were clumps of *pitaya*, each with numerous arms branching out from the base and turning upward, parallel to the others, and rising to twice or three times the height of a man. Each stem, pale green and slightly fluted, was thick as a man's leg. Between the *pitayas* were clumps of *cholla*, a small, brown, vicious plant of many branches, each branch having a hundred sections and each section a hundred needlelike spines. Here and there a giant saguaro towered over the *pitayas* like a live, green pole, often with a single short pole branching out and turning up near the top. Softly rounded mounds of pale *palo verde* and lacelike mesquite trees rose above the lower desert growth.

The men went through the gate and into the compound. A number of dogs, rawboned and gaunt, sprawled here and there. Several hens, no two with the same color or markings, were marching about, clucking and intent. The girl who had driven the dog through the gate was trying to shove one obstinate hen into a corner where there was a nest. A boy of eight gave Teta careful scrutiny from the center of the compound. He wore only one garment, a pair of faded, patched denim trousers. Another boy of three, without any clothing, was belaboring a dog with a small *carrizo* stick. The dog found it easier to endure the cuffing than to move.

Teta stopped and gave a sweeping glance at the rooms, their furnishings, the fence, and the arrangement of the compound.

"Forgive me if I seem to have curiosity. I have not seen a Yaqui house since I was four. In the mountains there were not even shelters. On the *haciendas*, before the de-



portation, we lived in adobe houses with dirt floors and no windows. In the south the houses were made with steep roofs, thatched with palm leaves or grass to shed the rain."

"Yaqui houses are designed to keep off the heat of the sun rather than the rain, of which we have very little," Avalardo said. "Also, we build them to get all the breeze we can."

"In Yucatan I tried to remember how a Yaqui house was made. With your permission, I would like to look around."

"Certainly. Take your time."

Avalardo sat on a rawhide-covered stool and waited. The sun was low and the coolness of the February evening was beginning.

Teta went first to the sleeping room at the left of the gate. The roof was supported by posts and made of *vegas*, horizontal logs, upon which lay *carrizo* stalks to a thickness of several inches. Covering the *carrizo* stalks was a layer of earth. The walls were *carrizo* stalks, woven horizontally between the posts supporting the roof. The space between the *carrizo* stalks was such as to permit the circulation of air and yet obscure vision sufficiently to give a degree of privacy.

To the right of the gate Teta entered the cooking room. It was constructed like the sleeping room, but was much larger and the side next to the courtyard was open. Near the front was an elevated earthen cooking hearth; a *metate* and a *mano* for grinding corn were nearby. A round clay water *olla* was held between three prongs of a post in one corner. In another corner were shelves containing earthen and wooden bowls, wooden spoons, small amounts of corn, beans, and strings of garlic. Two square five-gallon water cans sat on the floor by the cooking hearth.

Ropes, dried herbs, dried strips of meat, and an assortment of other objects hung on the walls.

At the end of the cooking room was another sleeping room, built like the first one, but smaller. The door was closed, and Teta heard women's voices within. Beyond this was a shed room with an open front facing the yard. The fence around the compound was made with *carrizo* pickets set upright, woven tightly together, and supported by mesquite posts.

Near the rear of the compound was a *ramada*, an arbor with flat roof and open sides. To the left was a rack made of poles. On it were typical tools for working the land: an axe, a hoe, a hand scythe, a long-handled steel shovel, and a wooden shovel for winnowing grain.

The sun was down when Teta finished his inspection of the compound. Avalardo, who had been waiting, said, "I am impressed by your interest in a Yaqui house."

"It is all new and strange to me. My uncle told me many times what it was like in the Yaqui villages, but it was difficult for me to get a clear picture."

Avalardo said, "I think you must be hungry. How long since you have eaten?"

"Yesterday, *achai*."

The women in the sleeping room at the end of the kitchen heard Avalardo mention the necessity for food. Two came out of the room and stood looking at Teta. One was in her middle forties, of heavy-set, powerful build, with strong, massive features and thick, sturdy ankles. The other, in her late twenties, was more slender, full-breasted, and smooth-faced. Their dresses were similar; each had a flounced calico skirt gathered at the waist with a drawstring and a short cotton blouse which hung loose at the bottom and reached just below the top of the skirt.

Both were barefooted, and each had a woven *rebozo* over her head.

Avalardo, indicating the older woman, said, "This is my wife, Lupe, and," with a nod toward the other, "this is my other woman, María."

Teta shook hands with each in turn. He found Lupe's grasp strong and hearty. María's was timid and weak.

Lupe went to the elevated kitchen fireplace and busied herself with the earthen pots and bowls. She fanned the coals and set stew, frioles, and coffee bubbling. María took live coals from the fireplace and started a fire in a hearth on the ground near the center of the compound.

"It is ready," announced Lupe after a while in a deep throaty voice.

A baby awakened and began to whimper. María took her from a swinging cradle, sat on a stool beside the fireplace, and nursed her at the left breast. This had scarcely begun when the little boy without clothes came in on the right side and, standing on the ground, nursed that breast. Teta was amused by the arrangement, but quickly concluded there would be plenty for both children.

Avalardo went to the fireplace, took a *tortilla*, cupped it in one hand, and with a wooden spoon put some beans in it; from the other pot he added stew to the beans. Folding the *tortilla* over, he began eating Yaqui fashion, as if it were a sandwich. Lupe poured thick, sirupy coffee into a small pottery bowl and handed it to him without sugar or milk.

Teta was served in like manner, as were the girl and the older boy. Lupe then provided for herself. The family gathered around the warmth of the fire María had started.

As Teta ate, he considered the relationship of the family.

"Permit me, *achai*, who is the mother of these children?"

"They are all María's. In addition she had four others who died and went to Glory when they were babies."

"Does not Lupe have children?"

"She has had eight. Three died before they were two. One son is working on an *hacienda* near Nacozari, a married daughter is in the mountains, and three sons have been killed in the wars."

"Does not the *padre* object to your having two wives?" Teta asked.

"He will never perform a second marriage ceremony as long as a man has a living wife. Our other wives do not exist as far as he is concerned, but they are necessary."

"Why?"

"For generations we have had to fight for our lands. Many of our men are killed in the wars. At this time there are three women to every man. If each man were permitted only one woman, three-fourths of the women would not have children and in a few generations the Yaqui race would die out. The custom of the Yaquis has always been for every woman to have a man. In this way the number of births is as great as if there were one man for every woman."

"This is new to me. With the Mayas of Yucatan, each man is permitted one wife. How do you determine the number of wives a man may have?"

"It arranges itself. A man takes another woman when he is able to take care of her. The present governor of Potam has four."

"It should be the other way around," said Lupe. "A woman should have four husbands. I know women who could do with as many."

"What women!" said Avalardo.

"Because there is a scarcity of them, men think they are very important!" said Lupe.

"What is this? Who is important?" queried a small contralto voice with a slight quiver, from the door of the sleeping room at the end of the kitchen.

Teta saw a frail wisp of a woman leaning lightly on a walking stick of *carrizo* cane. Scarcely over five feet, she probably did not weigh eighty pounds. She was dressed like the other women, and her slender, calloused feet were bare. Her white, stringy hair hung loose down her back. Her face, with its many wrinkles, might have been chiseled from volcanic rock. It showed intelligence and fortitude, as well as suffering and sorrow. But the lilt of her voice proved that she had not lost her zest for living.

Avalardo said, "Abuela! This is Teta, the son of Juan Valencia." To Teta he said, "This is my grandmother. She has a hundred and five years."

"That I have, young man. I was born the year Hidalgo rang the church bell at Dolores. I was a grandmother when Benito Juárez came through the Yaqui villages. I knew your father, your grandfather, and your great-grandfather; what a man he was! I could tell you some things about him! And what has happened to your father?"

"He was hanged by an *hacendado* in Yucatan four years ago."

"Your mother?" asked Lupe.

"Mexican soldiers hanged her and thirteen other women in the *cuartel* in Hermosillo. I watched her as she struggled and her eyes bulged and her face swelled. It happened many years ago, but to me it was only yesterday."

"Why did they kill women?" asked Lupe.

"Because they would bear sons to fight the Mexicans," said Avalardo.

"What happened to you?" asked Abuela.

"I was sent to Guaymas, with the men, for deportation."

"You are the first to come back from Yucatan," said Avalardo. "How did it go?"

"It was bad, very bad. They put us in the bottom of a ship and locked all the openings. There was little light. The heat was unbearable. The air was foul, and the smell was sickening. We Yaquis have stout stomachs, but we are used to open air. Each day men died. We passed the bodies up through the openings and the guards threw them in the sea. So many died that by the time we reached Salina Cruz half of us could lie down at one time."

"Go on, young man. What happened when you reached Salina Cruz?" urged Abuela. Her watery old eyes bore steadily upon him.

"It was better when we landed. The jungle was hot and the mosquitoes swarmed, but we could breathe again. They marched us across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to Puerto Mexico where they put us in another ship and sent us to Progreso, Yucatan. An *hacendado* bought us."

"Bought who?" interrupted Lupe.

"My father, my uncle, two cousins, five other Yaquis, and me. We were sent on foot to a henequen plantation on the boundary of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. We were guarded by day and locked up at night. They did not need to lock us up; the *federales* of Porfirio Díaz were everywhere and we could not escape. We had fevers, chills, dysentery, and other sickness. In five years only my father, my uncle, and I were left from our group."

"Go on. What happened then?" asked Lupe in her throaty voice.

"Then we had bad luck. One day we were resting in the shade. The overseer came up, cursed us for resting, and hit

my uncle in the face with his quirt. I knocked him down. A guard came from behind and slashed me across the face with his *machete*." Teta indicated the scar on his left cheek.

"My father sprang upon the guard and strangled him to death before other guards could interfere. We were all bound and dragged to the quarters. That night the *hacendado* pronounced judgment. My uncle and I were to be whipped at once, and my father hanged. The two of us were beaten until we were unconscious; they threw water on us then and brought us to so we would have to watch them hang my father. Now I have seen both my mother and my father hanged."

"*Qué brutos salvajes! Los hijos de la chingada!*" boomed Lupe.

"Have you never killed? Have you not retaliated?" asked Avalardo.

"Yes, many times. On occasions it was a joy, on others my heart was not in it."

"The *hacendado*, did you get him?" asked Lupe.

"Yes, at last. When the revolution against Porfirio Díaz began we made our plans to escape. I killed the *hacendado* with a pitchfork, and my uncle killed the overseer with a *machete*. Then we went to Progreso and joined the *Maderistas*."

Teta had began his narration in the restrained Yaqui manner, but had become more fervent as he proceeded. Years with the Mexicans had influenced his mannerisms. He had risen to his feet and now was walking back and forth, gesticulating occasionally.

He related what had happened to him during the next four years of the revolution. Madero's General at Progreso

had sent Teta and his uncle in a contingent to Vera Cruz. But Madero did not keep his promise to return the lands to the Indians, so Zapata, in Morelos, rebelled against him. Teta and his uncle left the *Maderistas* and joined Zapata.

"Tell us about Zapata. What kind of a leader was he?" interrupted Avalardo.

"A great leader. He was like a fox, wise and cunning. No Federal general was ever able to cope with him."

"What a man!" said Lupe.

Madero was murdered by Huerta, and Zapata soon learned that Huerta was a madman, more ruthless than Porfirio Díaz had ever been. Zapata fought against Huerta. There were many battles in the *barrancas* and in the mountains; in one of these battles Teta's uncle was killed.

Two new rebellions against Huerta began in the north, one led by Carranza in Nuevo Leon and the other by Pancho Villa in Chihuahua. Both forces were moving toward Mexico City. Huerta fled from the country and Zapata took Mexico City. Villa arrived first from the north. Many Yaquis were with him, and Teta got his first news from the Rio Yaqui since the deportation.

Zapata and Villa had a meeting. Zapata wanted nothing from the Government except land for the Indians. This, Villa promised, and Zapata withdrew his ragged forces to Morelos. Teta joined the *Villistas*.

Villa had no opportunity to keep his promise about the land. Carranza arrived from the north and sent his best general, Obregon, to drive Villa from the City. Villa was defeated and began a slow retreat along the railroad to the northwest, to Agua Caliente, to Zacatecas, and to Durango, where his forces scattered.

"Is Villa a general of distinction?" asked Avalardo.



"He has great courage. He is ruthless and daring, but he lacks Zapata's wisdom. He has only one mode of battle, that of frontal assault. If that fails, he is beaten and will retreat until he can prepare for another such attack."

"My son," said Abuela to Teta, "your narration fills me with sadness. That is how it has always been with our people. It is forever violence, beatings, shootings, hangings; forever plundering, robbing, executions, retaliations; forever massacres, tortures, deportations, and always separation of families. Ten big wars I can remember and hundreds of little wars, all for the land. Wars and battles! Fighting and dying! That is why there are four Yaqui women to each Yaqui man."

"It has been necessary, Abuela," said Avalardo. "We have had no other choice."

"The *yoris*, both Mexican and American, want our lands," said Lupe. "They would take the lands which have always belonged to us. They would make *peónes de campos* of us all. If we resist, we are barbarians and driven into the desert, deported, and slaughtered."

"It is true," said Avalardo. "Tell us, Teta, how did you get back to the Rio Yaqui?"

"When I left Villa at Durango, I went over the Sierra Madre to Mazatlan. From there I rode the train. A year with Villa's army taught me how to use the railroads. The train stopped at Lencho Switch today. I got off and came here."

"Did you know to what household you were coming?" asked Lupe.

"No. I did not remember where anyone lived on the Rio Yaqui. The path I took through the desert led to this place."

"The *Sud Pacifico* was not built from Guaymas to Ma-

zatlan at the time of the deportation. How did you know where to leave the train?" asked Avalardo.

"I remembered the landmarks, the peaks, and the valleys of the Bacatete Mountains to the north."

"We are glad you have come back to us. Our house is your house. You must be very tired. You may sleep under the shed beyond that room," said Avalardo. "You will find a *petate* there, and you have your blanket."

Avalardo, followed by María carrying the baby, went to the sleeping room across from the cooking room. Soon Lupe and Abuela went to the other sleeping room, where the older children had been sent earlier.

Teta remained sitting by the fire. He should have been sleepy, but the excitement of returning to the Rio Yaqui and finding friends dispelled his weariness. He put mesquite wood on the fire and sat gazing at the flame.

The fire burned briskly, brightening the compound. At a slight noise from the door to the childrens' sleeping room, Teta looked up. There, in the firelight, stood a young woman like none he had ever seen before. Her body had the grace of a willow tree and the supple, steely strength of a mountain lion. Her face, with high cheekbones and flat planes, had a brooding quality. Her jet-black eyes sparkled in the reflection from the firelight. The openings between the lids were narrow and slanted slightly upward toward the temples. She stood very straight, with lifted chin. Her hair, in glistening black braids, reached to her waist. Two cartridge belts, one slung from each shoulder, crisscrossed her chest to emphasize the strongly molded, firm, yet softly rounded breasts beneath her thin cotton blouse. Though her faded cotton skirt hung in loose folds from the small waist, it revealed

shapely thighs which gave the impression of great power. Below the skirt were small ankles and slender feet, the toes splayed by the thongs of her sandals.

As Teta stared at her, the only change in his expression was a narrowing of his eyes. A full minute passed; he could not take his eyes from her, and he could not think of a word to say.

She broke the spell. "You have become a man since I saw you."

A musical quality vibrated in her low-pitched voice.

"When was that?" he asked.

"On that horrible day in the *cuartel* at Hermosillo, when my mother was hanged beside yours and my baby brother's head was broken."

"You were with the people from Rancho Pimas?"

"Yes."

"There were several girls in the group."

"Do you recall the skinny one who dogged your footsteps from Rancho Prieta to Hermosillo?"

"Were you the little pest called Chepa?"

"Yes, I am Chepa."

All the while, her brilliant eyes took note of his long, lithe body, his powerful shoulders, his stern chin, the scar on his left temple, and probed beneath his masklike face.

"It is strange how people change," he said.

"For the better?" she asked, with a smile which brought forth a fleeting, elusive dimple in her right cheek.

"Yes."

"You have just returned from Yucatan," she said.

"How do you know that?"

"I have heard all you said tonight, from that room there."

"Why did you not come out?"

"I did not dare, without knowing who you were."

"You were hiding?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"These are bad times for some Yaquis, almost as bad as in the days of Porfirio Díaz."

"What happened to you after I was taken from the *cuartel*?"

Chepa told all that happened to her until she shot Don Pablo.

"The horse. Did you get the horse when you killed Don Pablo?"

"Yes," said Chepa. "He was gentle and I had no trouble catching him, but he was so tall I had to climb him like I would a tree."

"You could ride a horse?"

"Yes."

She went on with the account of her journey to the south. Already she knew how to travel without leaving a trail. For days she traveled, keeping to the ridges by day and going into the valleys at night to find water for herself and the horse. At length she began to recognize distant mountain patterns and knew that she was east of the Bacatete Mountains. She turned west for two days and came to three hills which she knew were the Three Brothers on the east side of the Valley of Agua Caliente. When she reached the pass between the Middle Brother and the South Brother in the early morning, she saw the eastern escarpment of the Bacatete Mountains a dozen miles away across the valley. Directly in front of her, resplendent in the morning light, was the Hill of the Rooster and its twin peak, Zamahaca.

Between her and the mountains was a line of Mexican

forts, extending north and south along the valley. To the north was the Fort of Punta de Agua, and toward the south at intervals of eight to twelve miles were the Forts of Arenas, Pitayita, Agua Caliente, Torocobampo, Coyote, and San Juanico. Immediately in front of her was the Fort of Agua Caliente. She waited until night and went between it and the Fort of Pitayita to the Pass of San José, which was several miles north of the Hill of the Rooster. She knew the watering places in the northern part of the Bacatetes and thought she would find Yaquis there. The next morning at the *tinaja*, natural cistern, of Cinco de Mayo she rode into the camp of Avalardo and Lupe.

"That is when you first knew them?" asked Teta.

"Yes. When they heard my story, they adopted me. I lived with them for four years, until they returned to Torim."

"Why did you not come to Torim with them?"

"I could not leave the mountains. That day, in the *cuartel* at Hermosillo, I made a vow. To keep it is the most important thing in my life; I can only do so by staying in the mountains."

"I, too, made a vow that day. I have not done much about it yet, but now that I am back with my people I will fulfill it with God's help."

For a time they regarded each other intently, silently; the resolve of each seemed to blend with that of the other.

At length she said, "You now know what happened to me. I must go."

Her manner had been one of camaraderie, frank and warm. Now she became detached and cold. She unslung and inspected her rifle and drew her gray *rebozo* over her head, throwing the ends over her shoulders.

"You go at this hour?" he asked.

"Yes. It is the best time for me to travel."

"Must you go? I have long been out of touch with my people. I want to learn about them and you."

"Some other time, perhaps, but it is important that I be many miles from here when day breaks."

"I will go with you."

"No. I must go alone." There was finality in her voice.

"Are you hurrying to your husband?"

"I have no husband. In my life there is no place for a man."

"Will I see you again?"

"Who knows?"

"Which way will you go?"

"To the north, over the rim of the mountains."

She walked into the desert jungle. Teta stood by the fire for a time, looking in the direction she had taken; then he examined the stars and concluded she would have about three hours in which to get over the rim.

## CHAPTER 3

TETA awoke to activity in the household. The reflection of firelight played on the fence of the compound, and the aroma of boiling coffee permeated the crisp chill of the air. No evidence of daybreak was apparent, and the stars toward the south were bright and near in a black sky.

He thought of Chepa and wondered if she were now over the rim of the mountains. He looked for the constellation of Orion and saw it low in the west. It was just past the meridian when she left; she had been gone for about three hours, he judged. She should be over the rim by now, and it was still not dawn. He was filled with concern for her.

He remembered how she looked as she stood poised in the doorway, with her *rebozo* hanging from one shoulder and her rifle suspended by a leather strap from the other, her animated face with the elusive dimple in the right cheek, the white, even teeth, her firmly modeled chin, which she had a way of tilting upward to emphasize her

statements. Her facial expression had been warm when she talked with him, then cold when her thoughts turned to her journey to the mountains. As he thought of her, the muscles in his throat tightened as they had earlier in the night.

He unrolled from his blanket, got up, set his *petate* against the wall of the shed room, wrapped his blanket around his shoulders, and walked out into the compound. For some time he stood looking toward the north, the direction Chepa had gone. Then he went to the cooking room, which was bright with firelight. Avalardo sat by the fire, watching Lupe as she prepared the morning meal.

"You rise early," Teta said.

"It is a habit," Avalardo replied. "One gets cold toward morning, and it is better to get up and make a fire."

After a moment he added, "You talked with Chepa last night."

"Yes, you did not tell me she was here."

"We left that for her to do. You received a compliment when she let herself be known to you. She is very cautious, and very discerning."

"Tell me of her."

"You will learn in time. We seldom speak of her. She is a dedicated person and is respected by every loyal Yaqui. The old men value her counsel, and the Mexican Army has a high price on her head."

"This is for you," said Lupe, giving Teta a *tortilla*.

While he was still eating, the faint beating of a drum was heard from the east. The rapid, high-pitched cadence of the beat followed a definite pattern. Avalardo watched the questioning expression on Teta's face until the drum ceased.

"It is the drummer at the Yaqui *guardia*," he said then,

"giving notice that there will be a meeting this morning. We have a matter to consider. You should go with me. Most of the men in the village will be there. You will not remember them, but the older ones will remember you, your father, and your grandfather."

"I would like to go," said Teta.

"It is two miles to the *guardia*. We will start when we have drunk our coffee."

As they walked across the clearing toward the road in the early morning light, they met María returning from the river with a can of water on her head. The vessel was a square five-gallon oil can with the top cut out. María carried it neatly balanced, and apparently without effort. Her carriage was erect, she moved with a graceful, gliding walk, and her skirts swished in rhythmic swirls.

The road wound through the jungle of *cholla*, *pitaya*, *saguaro*, and *mesquite*. The sun was not yet up, but the air was dry, and each step raised a small cloud of dust. Halfway to the village, they came to another clearing with a cluster of *carrizo* houses. Two women were returning from the river, each with a can of water balanced on her head; they moved with the same graceful, gliding motion as María.

The sun had risen when they reached Torim, the Place of the Pack Rats. Teta paused to look across the old plaza, now inches deep in sandy dust which would fog up into dust clouds with the slightest breeze. His earliest recollections were of the village when his family lived in a *carrizo* house on the outskirts. At that time, and until the town was laid in ruins by the Revolutionists in 1911, it was the capital of the Yaqui Zone.

A great stone church, built long ago by the Franciscans, had stood on the basaltic hill west of the plaza. Between



the church and the river was the Mexican General's house, a spacious adobe structure with a wide portal. On the north and east sides of the plaza were pretentious homes of the Mexican and American *hacendados*, men to whom Porfirio Díaz had given the rich valley lands of the Yaquis. In the center of the plaza was a monument, a typical feature of Mexican towns.

Madero's army, made up of Yaquis from the mountains, had wrecked the town which to them was a symbol of the Díaz regime. Only the foundation of the church remained. The houses of the *hacendados* had been partially destroyed, only thick, roofless walls remaining. All that was left in the plaza were four battered palm trees and the monument, now scarred and defaced.

The General's house, on the hill by the church, had been in part restored and was now swarming with Mexican soldiers.

"Why the soldiers?" asked Teta.

"It is the Mexican garrison," said Avalardo.

To the east of the plaza another adobe house had been partially rebuilt. Once it had been an imposing structure of two large rooms with a breezeway between. A broad portal faced the plaza and another extended along the house at the back. Widely spaced rafters were all that remained of the roof of the portal facing the plaza. At mid-day these would cast banded shadow patterns on the worn tile floor beneath. On the floor, in concentric rows, were a number of heavy timbers used for seats. A dozen Yaqui men were standing or lounging on the portal.

"That is the *guardia*, the Yaqui garrison and headquarters," said Avalardo.

"Then there are a Mexican garrison and a Yaqui garrison within three hundred paces of each other?" asked Teta.

"It is true."

"What do the Mexican soldiers do?"

"They watch us."

"What do the Yaquis do?"

"We watch them."

"Do each mount guard against the other at night?"

"Yes. Those are the night guards at the *guardia* now."

"Only Yaquis live in the village now?"

"Yes, with the exception of the Mexican soldiers and their families. The Revolution cleared all *yoris*, foreigners, out of the Rio Yaqui, and many Yaquis moved back from the mountains to hold the land. That is why I came back."

"Now that Yaquis have their lands, why does the Government keep a garrison here?"

"The Government is still composed of *yoris* who want our lands. Its garrisons will make it easier for the *yoris* to take them."

The two men were walking across the plaza toward the *guardia*. In front of the portal was a wooden cross, the height of a man and made of heavy timbers. Beside it was a post, higher than the cross, and with two forks near the top.

Teta stopped and looked at the post.

"This is the whipping post?" he asked.

"Yes. Those who violate Yaqui law are tied to it and whipped."

"I saw it used once when I was very small; I barely remember."

At the portal Avalardo ignored the night guards with the exception of Felipe, the sergeant. To him he said, "This is Teta, my godson. He is Juan València's boy. He returned yesterday from Yucatan."

Everyone heard this and noted it well although none

gave any evidence of having heard. Felipe extended his hand in a limp Yaqui handshake.

"Let us sit down," said Avalardo, indicating that Teta was to sit beside him on the inner row of seats.

Men and boys began to arrive from the *ranchitos* up and down the valley. Their dress and weapons were like Avalardo's. Each man placed his rifle against the wall at the back of the portal. Some hung their cartridge belts on their rifles; others kept them on.

Everyone seemed to know where he was supposed to sit or stand. The older men took the second and third rows of seats. The younger men and boys stood beyond the third row. Only five other men took their places on the inner row. These Avalardo introduced to Teta as the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Governors, and Captain Mario Gomez, the War Chief. Mario was tall and thin, with Mongoloid eyes, thick black hair, and a drooping mustache. Teta thought him about forty years of age, but later found he had underguessed by twenty years, an error easily made in judging the age of a Yaqui man.

Teta now realized that Avalardo had invited him to sit in the inner circle as a temporary honor because he was Avalardo's godson.

While waiting for the meeting to begin, the men sat silently gazing at the floor or out into space. No one looked directly at Teta, but he knew he was being appraised by everyone. Teta, not versed in Yaqui etiquette, looked at those about him openly and searchingly.

Occasionally the silence was broken by a question, which received a monosyllabic answer. The men, each occupied with his own thoughts, would spit at intervals. Teta noticed that everyone, even Avalardo, had the habit. A man would lean forward, let go a small amount of white

cottonlike saliva, barely missing his feet, then resume his scrutiny of space or the floor.

"Either the Yaquis in Yucatan never had the habit or got over it," Teta mused. "There must be something in the dust which makes a man want to spit."

At length, Avalardo and the four Assistant Governors arose and went to one of the rooms at the back of the portal. Teta looked up questioningly, wondering what was expected of him. Mario, by a scarcely perceptible gesture, indicated he was to remain seated. Presently the Governors came out of the ceremonial storage room in the order of their rank. Each, with the exception of the Fifth Governor, carried a baton which had a silver knob on one end and a metal point on the other. The Fifth Governor had a rawhide whip, his symbol of office as the law-enforcing officer, wrapped around his waist.

The Governors marched solemnly to the cross in front of the portal, and each stuck his baton in the ground before it.

"What does that mean?" Teta asked in an undertone.

"That the meeting is now in session," said Mario.

The Governors returned to their places on the inner circle, and Avalardo explained the purpose of the meeting. Some Mexicans were cutting crossties from mesquite trees on lands belonging to Torim without authority from the village. Avalardo had been to see them and asked that they go away, leaving the timbers they had cut. Claiming that he had permission from the Mexican General of the Yaqui Zone, the contractor refused to go. The people of Torim must now decide what action they should take.

Discussion got under way slowly because every person in the *guardia* was giving the question careful consideration. Various opinions were expressed in voices so low

Teta had to strain to hear them. As time passed two proposals emerged. One, advocated by the Third Governor, was for killing the woodcutters without delay. The Third Governor was a small man, but he spoke with great conviction and force.

"The Mexican General, with the help of the *yoricoyotes*, is selling wood which belongs to Torim. The money will go to the General, with just enough paid to the *yoricoyotes* to keep them loyal to him. The only way to stop the woodcutting is to kill the woodcutters. In the future the contractors will come to us when they want our timber."

The other point of view, voiced by Mario, the War Chief, was for delaying action until an effort could be made to get the President of Mexico to remove the woodcutters. Mario feared that immediate action against the woodcutters would set off another Yaqui war, forcing the village peoples to retire to the mountains for an indefinite time, leaving their land unprotected.

The older men had been through several such wars; they had endured the privations of life in the mountains, and knew it would be a serious matter to start another war. When Avalardo called for a vote, a majority was in accord with Mario.

Next came the question of how to contact the President. An ex-governor on the second row proposed that the village send Avalardo to Mexico City to talk with the President.

"That would take money," objected the Third Governor, "and the village has no money. Even though Avalardo rode a freight train to the City, he would never get to see the President. Other villages have tried it without success. The President is closely guarded. One has to get an appointment through his secretaries, and they tell the Ya-

quis, 'The President is too busy today. Come back tomorrow.' This goes on until the Yaquis give up and come home."

This truth required no answer.

Another ex-governor suggested that Avalardo explain the village's grievance in a letter to the President.

The Third Governor was on his feet again. "The villages of Potam and Vicam tried that. Their letters probably never left Vicam Station. The postmaster there is the General's spy. He inspects all mail which comes in or goes out."

A young man standing beyond the third row spoke up, "Send the letter by messenger to Navajoa. The mails are not watched there."

"Who is he?" asked Teta.

"Tomás, my future son-in-law," said Mario with pride.

It was decided that a letter would be written. By mid-afternoon Avalardo announced that the meeting would adjourn. No one left his place until the Governors had gone to the cross, taken up their batons, and marched to the storage room.

When Avalardo returned, he said to Teta, "Do you read and write Spanish?"

"Yes."

"How did you learn?"

"In Yucatan a priest made me an acolyte. One day he asked me if I would like to learn to read. I told him I wanted to very much. He taught me at night, without the knowledge of the *hacendado*, who did not want the workers to know how to read. After I learned, the priest gave me a copy of a history of Mexico. I read it many times."

"Did it tell about the Yaquis?"

"Yes. It called the Yaquis a stubborn, warlike tribe



which was preventing the settlement of Sonora. It praised Porfirio Díaz for using firmness and resolution in dealing with us."

"That is to be expected," said Avalardo. "Let us go home and eat. Since our Secretary is ill, you can write the letter to the President. I do not read or write."

The letter had been written and sent to Navajoa by messenger. Twilight was fading and the evening air was chilly. Teta and Avalardo were sitting by the fire in Avalardo's compound.

"Who are the *yoricoyotes*?" asked Teta, lighting a cigarette with a brand from the hearth.

"They are Yaqui traitors. They are paid by the Government to act as spies against their own people."

"Then they are more dangerous than the Mexicans."

"Much more. A *yoricoyote* knows where the watering and hiding places in the mountains are. One *yoricoyote* is worth many soldiers to the Mexican Army."

Avalardo told of the Yaqui Auxiliary Battalion which had long been a part of the Mexican Army, and of the Battalion's *yoricoyote* leaders, from Loreta Villa to Luis Pilon.

When he had finished with the *yoricoyotes*, Avalardo slowly turned his jet-black eyes on Teta and asked, "Why did you come back to the Rio Yaqui? We are very poor here. You could have done well elsewhere."

Teta gazed at the fire for a time before he answered.

"I had to return. At Hermosillo, when my mother was hanged, I made a promise. When my father was hanged in Yucatan, it doubled my desire to fulfill that promise. Here, in the village and in the mountains, I will avenge my parents."

"I understand," said Avalardo.

"Before I can do anything I must obtain the confidence of our people. Can you tell me how to achieve that? What can I do to become accepted?"

Avalardo pondered this for a few minutes then said, "You can take part in everything the people do: the meetings at the *guardia*, the religious services, the fiestas, the dances, the wedding ceremonies, and the funerals. You can help with the sick and you should spend some time making jokes with the men who loaf at the *guardia*. You can show consideration for the women. When you do these things long enough and with the proper feeling, the people will slowly accept you."

Both men were silent for a while; then Teta said, "I must relearn the customs of my people."

Two months went by. Teta attended other meetings at the *guardia*. Abuela died, and so great was her place in the village she was given a forty-eight-hour funeral, an honor accorded to few Yaquis. Teta had made himself useful during the continuous funeral ceremony. Mario's daughter, Marcelena, married Tomás with a Yaqui wedding and fiesta. Teta toasted the groom with raw mescal until he was as thick-tongued as the Second *Maestro*, lay priest. The Fiesta de Gloria, a Passion Play enacted during Holy Week, was observed, and Teta chopped wood, mended fires, carried food, and did errands for the various dancing societies throughout the four days and nights of it. Several of the marriageable girls from fourteen to sixteen turned their charms on him, but to each he responded with the same aloof friendliness and courtesy. He made a casual visit to each household and came to know the name of every man and woman in the village. He completely

won the hearts of the village children; they followed him everywhere he went.

Ten days after Easter, Avalardo called another meeting at the *guardia*. Teta sat in the third row of seats, replacing the Secretary who, until Teta's return, had been the only man in Torim who could read and write. The Secretary was still sick.

After opening the meeting Avalardo said, "We have a letter from the Mexican General in Esperanza. Teta will read it to you."

Teta went to the open space within the inner circle, took the letter from Avalardo, and read:

TO THE GOVERNOR OF TORIM:

YOUR LETTER OF RECENT DATE ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC COMPLAINING ABOUT CERTAIN CONDITIONS AND SITUATIONS, AND ESPECIALLY A WOODCUTTING CONCESSION LET TO A MEXICAN CITIZEN, HAS BEEN REFERRED TO ME BY THE PRESIDENT'S SECRETARY. YOUR WRITING TO THE PRESIDENT WAS ILL-ADVISED AND PRESUMPTUOUS.

THE CONCESSION WITH THE WOOD CONTRACTOR IS LEGAL AND APPROVED BY THE PROPER AUTHORITIES. AS GENERAL OF THE YAQUI ZONE, I WILL NOT TOLERATE ANY INTERFERENCE WITH HIM OR ANY OF HIS WORKMEN.

IN THE FUTURE, YOU WILL ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO ME.

LUIS E. PEÑA

GENERAL OF THE YAQUI ZONE

Teta returned to his seat on the third row and silence ensued. Each man considered what he had heard.

At length the War Chief spoke, "I do not believe the President ever saw the letter."

"I am sure he did not," said the Third Governor. "It has happened as I predicted. The letter was sent back to the General, and now we are where we were in the beginning."

A man on the second row asked, "Are the Mexicans still cutting our wood?"

"Yes," Avalardo said.

"Have we received any payment from the contractor or the General?"

"No."

Again there was silence, while these facts were pondered. Then a long period of speechmaking began, one discourse following another. The speeches differed as to detail, but all followed the same basic pattern: a review of the relations of the Yaquis with the Spaniards, the relations with the Mexicans, the Yaquis' rights to their lands, the persecutions, deportations, hangings, broken promises, bad faith, outrages, and the ultimate purpose of the Mexican Government to break the Yaquis' spirit and possess their lands. Although the speakers did not raise their voices or gesticulate, Teta felt their effectiveness by the increasing tension.

Avalardo made no attempt to stop the discussion or to direct its course. When, in the afternoon, there was a lull and it was apparent no one else wished to talk, he said, "What shall we do about the General's letter and the woodcutting?"

It was agreed that the General's letter should be ignored, but the woodcutting was another matter. The Third Governor still wanted to exterminate all Mexicans caught cutting or hauling wood. The War Chief again urged restraint. In the end it was decided that the Governor would go once more to the woodcutters and tell them

that they were trespassing on the lands of Torim and taking property belonging to the village without the consent of the owners. He was to urge them to go away and warn them that if they stayed it would be at their own peril. They did not decide what to do if the woodcutters refused to leave.

Teta took no part in the discussion. Several times he wanted to speak, but restrained himself. No one had asked for his opinion, and he realized that he was not yet completely accepted by the people of the village.

"What do you think?" Mario asked Teta, after the meeting was over.

"The Yaquis are truly a nation of historians."

"Any Yaqui who does not know our history is considered of no importance," said Mario.

Conscious of his own ignorance of Yaqui history, Teta nodded his head.

## CHAPTER 4

THE next morning Teta went to see Primero, who was younger than he but had a wife and two children. Teta did not know him well, but thought him a quiet and modest person of intelligence and fortitude. He had noticed Primero at the *guardia* during the discussions regarding the woodcutting. He had not spoken at any meeting, but had followed every speech and comment with concentrated interest.

Primero was eating his morning meal when Teta arrived.

"Come in," he said, "and eat with me."

"Thank you. I will take coffee."

Primero's wife brought coffee. Teta talked of trivial matters until Primero had finished eating; then he said, "I am going to the river, would you like to walk with me?"

"Yes."

When they were some distance from the house, Teta

said, "You seemed deeply concerned when the woodcutters were discussed at the *guardia*."

"Yes. It is a matter which troubles me, and I have given it much thought."

"What do you think?"

"Many things. Mostly of our inability to do anything about it."

"Do you believe it was wise to write to the President?"

"It was worth trying, but I had little hope for it."

"In your opinion, what should be done now?"

"The woodcutters should be stopped. If not, the General will give other and larger concessions. In a few years our timber will be gone, the General will be richer, and the *yoricoyotes* will be fatter. It will not stop when the timber is all cut. Then the General will start disposing of the land to Mexicans and Americans, as in the time of Porfirio Díaz."

"I do not understand why Avalardo, Mario, and the older men are so cautious and reluctant to take a strong position," said Teta.

"I understand it. They realize how easy it would be to start another war, and they know what war means. They have been through several. They have lived in the mountains more years than they have lived in the village."

"Many weeks have passed, and the situation is now exactly the same as when the first meeting was held."

"Has Avalardo been back to see the contractor?" asked Primero.

"Yes, he went yesterday, and he got the same reply as the first time. The contractor is sure of himself and is confident that the General will protect him."

"Then we are back where we started."

"The time has come for action," said Teta. "The Gen-

eral is determined to take over Yaqui property. No help can be expected from Mexico City. The contractor has been warned twice. Now something must be done."

"Do you have a plan?" asked Primero.

"Yes. I know how we can stop the woodcutting and not involve the officials or the people of Torim."

"What would you do?"

"I would kill all the woodcutters in one swift attack. I went to their camp with Avalardo yesterday, and I observed everything well. There are seven of them, including the contractor. With eight men I could take them by surprise and make short work of it."

"Did you discuss it with Avalardo?"

"No. I do not think that he or anyone connected with village affairs should know. This is the first time I have mentioned it to any person."

"That is well," said Primero. "The General has spies among our people. You can never be sure that a *yoricoyote* is not sitting next to you at the *guardia* meetings. The General learns what is done and said at every meeting."

"Can that be true?" Teta said with surprise.

"It is true."

"Then we will be doubly cautious."

"The Yaquis have always been divided among themselves. Most of the battles and all of the wars we have lost have been due to traitorous Yaquis rather than to the strength of the Mexicans."

Teta knew this, but never before had it seemed so true.

They arrived at the river; Primero squatted on his heels against a tree and smoked a Yaqui cigarette. Teta sat on a log. Both were silent for a time. Primero aimlessly made marks on the ground with a stick, and Teta gazed unseeingly across the river.

"It needs to be done," said Teta with finality.

"Yes," said Primero in the same tone, looking up.

"I am a newcomer here. I do not know who can be trusted and who cannot, nor who has courage and who does not. Those who can be trusted and who have courage know little of me. You know these things and could be of great help."

"Have you ever heard of Chepa, she of the mountains?" asked Primero.

"I have seen her but know very little about her."

"I have never seen her, but I do know something of her. She is a legend already. The Mexicans fear her as no other person. Mexican women scare their children into obedience by telling them that if they are not good, Chepa of the Mountains will take them."

"Is her reputation that great?" asked Teta with much interest.

"If the wood contractor's workmen thought Chepa's band was after them, they would leave without collecting their pay. We might start a rumor so they will hear of it."

"That would not settle the matter," said Teta. "The General would send soldiers to protect the workmen, and if these left, the contractor would get others."

"There is another way. We could go to the mountains, find Chepa, and arrange for her to bring a part of her band and kill the woodcutters. No one in the villages would need to know about it, and the Mexicans would have no warning."

Teta considered the suggestion.

"The plan has merit. It would stop the woodcutting and would not implicate the officials of the village. I find two objections. This matter should be taken care of by the men of Torim. It is their wood which is being cut and it is their land which is in danger. Also, it is not fitting for the men

of Torim to let a woman from the outside fight for them. I would like to do this without Chepa's help."

"You are right," said Primero.

"Primero, can you find six other men who think and feel as we do?"

"I think I can."

"You are aware that they must be men of courage, and men who can keep a secret."

"I understand."

"They should be young men not known to the Mexican military; men on whom the General has no record."

"I agree."

"They should know the action will incur risk and sacrifice. It will mean escaping to the mountains and living there until the matter is forgotten or there is a change in the situation on the Rio Yaqui."

"The consequences are not to be underestimated," said Primero.

"How soon can you get a group together?"

"Maybe three days. Would it matter if some of the men came from other villages?"

"It would be a good thing to have them widely scattered. What is happening to the timber in Torim could happen in any village. The outcome here will be of importance to the other villages also."

"I have cousins in Vicam and others in Bacum. Some of them would find this exciting. In three days I will let you know."

Primero returned to his house, and Teta went east along the river toward the woodcutters' camp.

On the third day Teta went again to Primero's house. It was midmorning, and Primero came out to meet him. They started toward the river.



"How did it go?" asked Teta.

"Good. The first six men I talked with agreed to help us. We could get fifty or even a hundred."

"That gives me confidence, but the fewer people involved the better."

"I told the men we would meet tonight at a place I will show you. It is not far."

Primero led the way along a narrow, winding path to an opening as large as the compound of a Yaqui home. Trees, *pitaya*, and *cholla* formed an impenetrable wall on every side.

"This is the only entrance," said Primero. "The growth is so dense that firelight cannot be seen a hundred feet away, nor can anyone get within hearing distance except along this path."

"It is good. Will the men know how to find it?"

"I told them."

"Tell me about the men."

"First, there is my brother, Anselmo. He is younger than I."

"Why does he want to be included?"

"Because our father was hanged by Mexican soldiers ten years ago."

"Where?"

"Near Torocobampo, east of the Bacatete Mountains. He and our cousin were captured near a *ranchito*. The Mexicans did not have ropes, so they hanged them with barbed wire. Other Yaquis found the bodies two days later."

"Does Anselmo have a family?"

"Only a wife. They had two children, but both died as babies."

"Does he have a gun and ammunition?"

"Yes, a Winchester, and twenty cartridges."

"Who else?"

"There is Nacho, who has the looks of a bandit and the heart of a butcher."

"I remember him," said Teta, recalling a stocky man of about thirty, with Mongol face, thick lips, the steely eyes of a killer, and, in strange contrast, an engaging grin.

"Why did you choose him?"

"Because he hates the Mexicans so much. His parents were deported, and his sister was taken by the Mexican soldiers."

"Do you trust him?"

"Yes. He is ruthless, and that is what we want."

"A gun?"

"A Winchester, and twenty-five cartridges."

"Did you include the Third Governor?"

"No. I understood we were not to implicate any of the officials."

"That is very prudent."

"I spoke to Paroy, who is a *fariseo*. He is tall and of slight build."

"I remember him."

"He, too, has strong feelings about what the Mexicans are trying to do with the Yaqui lands."

"Will he fight?"

"Yes. For the sake of what he believes, but not for the love of fighting."

"A rifle?"

"A Mauser."

"Ammunition?"

"Yes, and we can always get cartridges for Mausers. Otero also has a Mauser. He lives in Bacum. I think you have never seen him."

"Why does our plan appeal to him?"

"The same reasons as most of the others. Many members of his family have been shipped away or killed. He has a great hate for the Mexicans."

"You trust him?"

"Yes. The other two are my cousins in Vicam. Manuel is my age and Anastacio is younger. Manuel has a Sharp's rifle, and Anastacio a Smith."

"Ammunition for both is hard to get. I hope they have some."

"Enough."

"Why are they willing to join us?"

"It was their father who was hanged with my father."

"Do all the men have families?"

"Yes. You seldom find a Yaqui man over twenty who is not married. You are the only unmarried man in the village. The single girls are much aware of that."

"We will see about them later," said Teta with a grin.

"When do you think we should make the attack?"

"As soon as possible. It will give less opportunity for any of the group to say anything which might arouse suspicion. We will decide on the time and other details tonight."

It was dark when Teta arrived at the clearing. Primero and the other six were already there, squatting or standing around a fire which lighted the area.

Primero said, "Teta, this is my brother, Anselmo."

"I have met Anselmo."

"You already know Nacho and Paroy. This is Otero, from Bacum, and these are my cousins from Vicam, Manuel and Anastacio."

Teta gave Otero an appraising glance. He was stocky,

with a round face and a short mustache. Next he looked at Manuel, who was of moderate stature, with large ears which stood out from his head.

"An honest face," Teta thought.

Anastacio was taller, more slender, and his ears were not so large, but his resemblance to Manuel was marked.

Teta walked across the circle of firelight and stood facing the group.

"Primero has told you of the plan and how necessary it is to carry it out with secrecy and stealth. I do not want any of you to join the band without knowing what it will mean. It will be easy to kill the woodcutters; the hard going will come afterwards. The woodcutters' camp is only three miles from the Mexican garrison at Torim, and eleven miles from the one at Vicam Station. The problem will be to elude the Mexican troops and get to the mountains. When we get there, we will have to stay and live as the other mountain Yaquis for weeks, months, or possibly years. That means lack of shelter, little food, and the constant lookout for Mexican troops. Before you decide, I want you to consider what lies ahead."

"When does the attack take place?" asked Otero.

"Tomorrow evening at dark."

"Why wait that long? Could it not be done in the morning?" asked Nacho.

"No. By making it just at dark, we will have all night to get away. If we do it earlier in the day, the Mexicans will pick up our trails within an hour."

"Getting away will be a problem," said Manuel.

"The woodcutters' camp is near the river. After the attack, we will retire to the river. There we will scatter, some of us going up the river for a distance and some down, but all of us wading in the water so as to leave no

tracks. Then, by different routes, we will go north to the mountains."

"Should we take our families?" asked Anselmo.

"If you wish, or you can arrange for them to join you later. If our plan is carried out as it should be, some time will pass before the Yaquis know who did it, and even longer before the Mexicans find out."

"How will we live in the mountains?" asked Paroy.

"We will do the best we can by hunting, foraging, and raiding."

"Could we hold up a train?" said Nacho.

"Perhaps."

"You can count me in," said Nacho.

"Me, too," said Otero.

"What about you, Paroy?"

"I will go."

"You, Manuel?"

"I am for it."

"Anastacio?"

"I go with Manuel."

"Anselmo?"

"I am with Primero."

"And Primero is with me," said Teta. "Can you be ready for the attack tomorrow evening?"

All nodded or said, "Yes."

"Good. Then this is the plan," said Teta. He picked up a stick and drew in the sand by the firelight. "Here is the river. The woodcutters' camp is there. At sunset we will meet at this curve in the river. It is a quarter of a mile from the camp. I will go ahead to make sure all the woodcutters are there, then I will come back for you. At dark we will move. After we decide who will take which woodcutter, we will surround the camp so that none can run

away. When I fire, each of you will shoot your man. We will then close in to make sure our volley has been effective. We must leave no one alive to identify us later."

"Do we meet again in the mountains?" asked Manuel.

"Yes," said Nacho. "I was born and grew up in the mountains. The best way to survive there is in bands. There should be at least twenty men with rifles to each band."

"Others will want to join us after we deal with the woodcutters," said Teta.

"Where shall we meet in the mountains?" asked Primero.

"At the spring called Buatachive. Do all of you know where it is?"

Everyone knew the spring.

"If Mexican troops should be camping there, we will meet at sundown on the ridge west of the spring."

"If anything should happen to me, Primero will be the leader until you decide whether you want to stay together or break up and join other bands."

Teta paused for any objection. Hearing none, he continued, "In the mountains we will need ammunition and food. Take all you can of both. Each of you should bring a bow and arrows for hunting; we must save our ammunition for raids."

Nacho looked very pleased at the mention of raids.

"Does anyone have a question?" Teta asked, as he rubbed out the marks he had made in the sand. "If not, I am going now to inspect the woodcutters' camp again."

The sun had sunk below the ragged palm trees in Torim's plaza. Avalardo said good night to the War Chief and the Third Governor and started home. He was almost



across the plaza when a Mexican soldier ran up to him.

"Colonel Borrego sends his compliments and asks that you be good enough to come by the *cuartel* on the way home."

Avalardo considered for a moment and said, "Yes, I will go now."

He wondered what the Colonel might want. Borrego had been transferred from Jalisco, and had not been long in the Yaqui Zone. Avalardo's dealings with him had been pleasant. He was friendlier toward the Yaquis than any Mexican officer except Captain Ramos, who was now also a colonel.

When he reached the *cuartel*, Colonel Borrego was waiting for him on the portal.

"It is kind of you to come," said the Colonel, shaking hands with Avalardo. "Will you sit down?"

He placed a stool for Avalardo, who leaned his rifle against the wall behind him and took one of the Colonel's cigarettes. The Colonel sat on an old ammunition box. After the customary interval of polite conversation, the Colonel said, "I wanted to ask you about buying some horses. The Army has authorized me to purchase twenty head. I thought you might know of Yaquis who would like to sell."

"It is possible. I will make inquiry and let you know."

"I will appreciate your help," said the Colonel.

After a moment he added, "I wonder if you were with the *Maderistas* during the Revolution?"

"Yes, I went south with them as far as Mazatlan. I was there when the Diaz garrison declared for Madero."

"So was I," said the Colonel.

They continued talking about the campaign. The sun went down, and stars came out.

A volley of gunfire was heard from the east. Both jumped to their feet and listened. The volley consisted of eight or nine shots, very close together. There was a pause, then three more shots in rapid succession. Minutes passed, and there were five more shots, singly and at irregular intervals.

"What can that be?" said the Colonel.

"It must be at the woodcutters' camp," said Avalardo.

"There is trouble there. Bugler, blow assembly," he shouted.

The soldiers came hurrying from their camps near the *cuartel*. When they had gathered, the Colonel said, "Captain Roca, take twenty-four men at double time to the woodcutters' camp and learn the cause of the rifle fire."

The men got their Mausers, formed in a column of twos, and set off at a trot.

Turning to Avalardo, the Colonel said, "I am going to follow the troops. Will you go with me?"

"Yes," said Avalardo.

The road went by the Yaqui *guardia*. As they passed, the War Chief, the Third Governor, and the night guards were standing beside the *guardia*, where they had watched the Mexican soldiers pass.

Avalardo called to the War Chief and the Third Governor. "We are going to investigate the gunfire. Come with us."

When they reached the woodcutters' camp, the soldiers had formed a circle around it, some distance back. The Captain had been cautious about grouping his men near the firelight until he was sure the attacking party had gone. He was standing by the fire, looking at seven bodies which were sprawled about. Fresh wood had been put on the coals, and flames lighted the area. Six bodies were

near the fire; one was some distance away, lying on its face, with the head pointing away from the fire.

The Colonel, followed by Avalardo, the War Chief, and the Third Governor, walked through the line of soldiers to the fire.

"A surprise attack, sir," said the Captain.

"Were all the men dead when you got here?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes. Six of them were hit by the first volley. The one over there started to run. They got him with the second volley. Five men were given the *golpe de gracia*. The assassins made sure that no one was left alive."

"Captain, how many men took part in this massacre?" asked the Colonel.

"Not many, seven or eight, I think. I have counted six different sets of tracks."

"What kind of tracks?"

"*Huaraches*, Yaqui."

"Which way did they go?"

"Down the trail toward the river."

"Take sixteen men with torches and follow them."

The Captain and the men got burning brands from the fire and set off on the trail. Meanwhile the Colonel, with Avalardo close behind, made a detailed inspection of each body. He finished with those near the fire and went to the one who tried to get away. The Colonel turned the dead man over on his back. He had been hit from three directions.

"Do you know him?" he asked Avalardo.

"I have seen him twice. He was the wood contractor."

"When did you see him?"

"Once several weeks ago, and again day before yesterday."

"Did you talk with him?"

"Yes."

"What about?"

"Both times I asked him to stop cutting wood on Torim's lands."

The Colonel looked Avalardo steadily in the eye. "Do you know anything about this affair?"

Avalardo returned the gaze. "I have no knowledge of it. I think I know why it was done, but I have no idea by whom."

The two men continued looking at each other until the Colonel shifted his eyes.

The Captain and his men were coming back along the river trail.

"What did you find?" asked the Colonel.

"The tracks went to the water and disappeared. They either went up or down the river. We are sure they did not go across because we inspected the bank on the other side."

"It will be useless to hunt the place where the tracks leave the river until daylight. We will hold these bodies as long as we can for the families to claim them. Place a guard with them. Be ready to start searching up and down the river for the place where the assassins' tracks leave the water at daybreak. When you find it, follow the trail with all dispatch. I will go back and telephone a report to the General."

The Colonel started back toward the village, followed by Avalardo, the War Chief, and the Third Governor. When they reached the *guardia*, the three Yaqui officials stopped there, and the Colonel hurried on to the *cuartel*.

Avalardo said, "Do either of you know or suspect who killed the woodcutters?"

"No," said the War Chief.

"I do not know who did it," said the Third Governor, but God knows it could not have been better done if I had planned it myself."

Teta was sitting by the fire, cleaning his rifle, when Avalardo entered the compound of his home. The other members of the family had gone to bed. Avalardo looked at the rifle, then at Teta.

"Do you know what happened tonight?" Avalardo asked.

"Yes."

"You helped make the attack?"

"Yes."

"Who was with you?"

"There were seven of us. It is better that you do not know the others as yet. The Military will be investigating everybody tomorrow."

"I know."

"No doubt the General will be here. There will be a great commotion, and they will suspect all the officials of Torim."

"That can hardly be. I was talking to Colonel Borrego when the gunfire started. I went with him to the woodcutters' camp. The War Chief and the Third Governor were also there."

"God is good. It could not have happened better," said Teta.

"They followed your tracks to the river. In the morning the soldiers will start searching the sands along the edge of the water, both up and down the river, to find where your party left the channel."

"They will find nothing. No two of us left the water at

the same place. I came out within a hundred feet of the Mexican *cuartel*, barefooted, on a path used by the soldiers and their *mujeres*. I went through the church where the ground is hard, put on my *huaraches*, and left by the Parish House, walking on the rocks to the foot of the hill."

"That was wise," said Avalardo. "What are your plans now?"

"I was waiting to see you before leaving for the mountains."

"Teta, you have done a great service to Torim and to the Yaqui people."

"You will not be having any more woodcutters for a while. The General will have to think up some new way of getting the *mordida*."

"The Third Governor was unhappy at not being included in the attack."

"It is well that he was not," said Teta.

"Will your party meet you in the mountains?"

"Yes, tomorrow night, at the spring called Buatachive."

"Do you know how to find it?" asked Avalardo.

"Yes, I remember the mountains better than I do the river villages."

"You must not delay longer. The General will be here in a few hours. The Colonel telephoned him as soon as he got back to the *cuartel*."

Teta smiled. "I do not think he did. I broke the telephone wire."

"You think of everything."

Teta went to the shed room and got his blanket. When he returned, Avalardo was waiting with a small sack of shelled corn, a bow, and a quiver full of arrows.

"You will need these," he said. "I can get more corn and will make another bow and more arrows."

"I am grateful."

"Will you be seeing Chepa?"

Teta looked quickly at Avalardo, wondering why he asked.

"It is possible. Good-by, *achai*."

"Go with God," said Avalardo.

Teta walked out into the night in the direction he had watched Chepa go three months before.

## CHAPTER 5

IT WAS early afternoon when Teta came to the spring called Buatachive. Nacho, Manuel, and Anastacio were already there. Nacho and Manuel were asleep under the scant shade of a *palo verde* tree, and Anastacio was sitting with his rifle across his lap. Teta noted with satisfaction that he was watching the trail from the north as well as the one Teta had just traveled from the south.

"Hello, Anastacio, how does it go?" asked Teta.

"Well enough."

"How long have you been here?"

"Manuel and I arrived some time after sunrise. Nacho came later."

"Any difficulties?"

"None. How was it with you?"

"I had no trouble. I left Avalardo's house at midnight, and it was daylight when I reached the foot of the mountains. At Pozo Verde I stopped at a place where my family camped when I was a boy."



"Have you slept?"

"No."

"If you wish to sleep, I will keep guard."

"Not yet, Anastacio. We need to find a campsite where we can watch the spring and the trails, yet not be seen. I will go look for such a place."

He scanned the ridges on both sides of the valley and concluded the one to the west held greater promise. He climbed the slope to the foot of a vertical cliff near the top of the ridge. Here he turned north, walking on the talus which had fallen from the face of the cliff. A quarter of a mile brought him to a small horseshoe canyon entering the valley from the west. He followed around the cliff and found a rock shelter at the head of the canyon. The floor of the shelter was fairly level, and the height varied from two to three feet at the back to twenty feet at the entrance. The ceiling was black with smoke, but there was no evidence of recent occupation. The overhang was large enough to shelter a hundred people from sun and rain. Trees and bushes grew in the canyon floor in front of the shelter, concealing it completely from the valley below.

Teta explored beyond the shelter, searching for a trail to the top of the cliff where he could examine the terrain above. At one spot the talus was piled so high that the cliff wall above was not more than twice the height of a man. He went on around the head of the horseshoe canyon and came to a crack in the wall. The opening was several feet wide and filled with rocks which had scaled off the sides. The ascent was steep, but by swinging his rifle across his back by the strap and using both hands he climbed to the rim. He found he was on the edge of a mesa which sloped gently upward toward the west. Walking back around the top of the horseshoe until he was above

the shelter, he observed that the floor below could not be seen from above. Continuing to a point on the right side of the canyon, facing the valley, he could see the trees at the spring. The trail which led to it from the south was visible for half a mile, and the one from the north for more than a mile. The opposite side of the valley was bare of vegetation except for a few saguaros and *pitayas*. A person coming from the east could be seen from the time he topped the ridge until he reached the bottom of the valley.

As Teta retraced his steps, he saw that the lip of the canyon had been cut back by the runoff from rains on the mesa. From the point where water poured over the cliff after a rain, he could trace the rocky channel of the dry creek by the growth in the canyon as far as the bottom of the valley.

At the break in the cliff wall he descended to the base of the dry waterfall and started down the rocky bed of the watercourse. At places it was completely covered by bushes and trees, and Teta was surprised at the number he remembered from his boyhood. Here was a large *hóhopo* tree, similar to the eucalyptus, with leaves like a cottonwood, but longer and more narrow. He recalled that it had no fruit and was good only for shade and firewood. Near it was a small *palo fierro*, with leaves like a mesquite, but of darker green. Its wood was hard and contained an oil which made it the best of all wood for burning, even better than mesquite. It bore no fruit, but had a cream-colored flower. Further down the channel was a great *hito* tree with long diamond-shaped leaves; it was in bloom and the flower was like that of a cottonwood. In the late summer, Teta remembered, it would have small red berries which, cooked with frijoles, gave them an excellent



flavor. Across the dry stream bed was a clump of *san juanico* bushes, and farther down was one which had grown into a tree, with sharp, spinelike leaves of soft gray-green. This tree produced no fruit and was bad to handle because of its sharp, pointed leaves.

Teta found that by following the stream bed he could stay hidden almost to the floor of the valley, and that by walking on the large gravel and boulders he left no tracks. When he reached the valley floor, he turned right toward the spring. He was pleased to find he could also pick his way along the dry watercourse to the spring without leaving footprints.

Nacho and Manuel were now awake.

"What have you found?" asked Nacho.

"A very good campsite," answered Teta.

"Is it far?" inquired Manuel.

"A third of a mile, perhaps."

"Do we need to take water?"

"Yes. Do any of you have a container?"

"I have a cooking pot, and all three of us have gourd canteens," said Anastacio.

"That is well. Fill them all, including the pot, and we will go to the shelter."

When the containers were filled, Teta said, "Follow me and I will show you how to go from here to the shelter without leaving tracks."

At the shelter the other three appraised the location approvingly.

"It will be necessary to keep a lookout above, on the right-hand point of the canyon. One rule I remember from my boyhood in the mountains is to see the other man before he sees you," said Teta.

"I well know," said Nacho, "the only way to survive here

is by constant vigilance. That is something we cannot overdo."

"I will take you up and show you the lookout."

When they reached the place where talus was piled high against the cliff wall, Teta said, "We will make a ladder to go here; it will save much time."

He led them to the break in the cliff, up to the top, and back to the lookout point.

Teta said, "With a short, curved rock wall here, about waist high, a lookout could stay behind it and not be seen against the sky."

"Why not do it now?" said Manuel.

"Why not?" said Nacho.

In an hour it was done.

The sun had set when they returned to the shelter.

"When it gets dark enough that smoke will not show, we will build a small fire," said Teta.

"What do we eat?" asked Nacho.

"We have some *tortillas*," said Anastacio. "Also, we have some frijoles we should cook tonight if we do not want to make smoke in the daytime."

When it was dark, the fire was built and Teta, with Manuel, went down the rocky path to see if the reflection showed from below.

When they returned, Nacho said, "What about it?"

"No light can be seen until one is within a hundred feet of the shelter."

As they ate *tortillas*, Teta said, "I do not think we need a guard tonight, but beginning early in the morning one of us should be at the lookout point day and night. Mexican detachments sometimes go through this valley to and from Vicam Station and the Fort at Tetacombiate. This is a good campsite, but a bad place to get cornered. The

spring below is a stopping place for Yaqui bands. It is possible for either enemies or friends to come from Guepare and across the mesa to the west. We will need to know about everyone who passes."

"We cannot be too careful," said Nacho.

"I am going to sleep," said Teta.

As he dozed off, it occurred to him that no one had mentioned the woodcutters.

The others were asleep next morning at daybreak when Teta got up. He looked in the cooking pot and saw that the frijoles were simmering. "Someone has been minding the fire during the night," he thought.

Anastacio arose and folded his blanket. He took a cold *tortilla*, heated it over the coals, folded it in one hand, put some frijoles in it, and started to eat.

"I will go up to the point," he said.

Soon after sunrise, he called down from the cliff above the shelter, "There are some Yaquis at the spring; two men, two women, and some children."

"It is probably Primero, Anselmo, and their families. I will go down," said Teta.

When he got to the spring, he found his surmise was correct. They were resting amid an assortment of baskets, a roll of flexible *petates*, and one square five-gallon can filled with utensils. They were not surprised when Teta appeared.

"Good morning," they said.

"Did you have a hard night?"

"For the children, yes."

"Come with me and we will eat. We have a pot of frijoles."

When they picked up their belongings, Teta noticed Primero had brought an axe and Anselmo a *machete*.

"Good," he said. "Other than rifles and cartridges, there is nothing we need more than the axe and the *machete*. We have to build a ladder. Come, I will show you a path that leaves no tracks."

At the shelter, the newcomers were fed and the children put to sleep on *petates* at the back.

"When did you leave Torim?" asked Teta.

"At dark last night."

"Did you stay at home night before last?"

"Yes, we decided to wait and be seen in the village yesterday. We told two or three people we would be leaving soon to work on a ranch north of Guaymas," said Primero.

"What happened in the village yesterday?"

"There was much excitement and commotion. The General came from Esperanza, and the Colonels from Vicam Station and Potam. We were told that there were many conferences at the woodcutters' camp, at the *guardia*, and at the *cuartel*."

"Were there any arrests?"

"No."

"Any clues as to who did it?"

"We did not hear of any."

"Excellent," said Teta. "How much food did you bring?"

"Enough for two weeks."

"We must make it last longer than that by hunting and foraging each day. Primero, if you and Anselmo will take turns today sleeping and keeping watch from the point above, the remainder of us will see what we can kill with our bows and arrows. Nacho and Manuel will go west to the spring at Guepare. They can learn if there are any Mexican troops or Yaqui bands camping there. Anastacio and I will go east to Aguajito and see how things are in that direction."

"Very well," said Primero. "If you will show me the path, I will go up and relieve Anastacio."

In the early afternoon, when Teta and Anastacio reached the spring at Aguajito, they met Otero and two other Yaquis.

Otero said, "These are my friends Miguel and José. They were so pleased when they heard about the woodcutters I asked them if they would like to join the band which killed them. Here they are with rifles and ammunition."

"You know what this life will be?" asked Teta.

"We know. We have been in the mountains before."

They were both strong, tall men in their thirties.

"Very well," said Teta.

On the way back to camp they killed two quail, a ground squirrel, and a large rattlesnake. They cut the snake's head off and carried the long squirming body with them.

Teta's party returned to the camp some time before Nacho and Manuel returned. With them were Paroy and his cousin, Chino, who had come to join the band. Paroy and Chino had gone directly from Potam to the mountains, crossing the railroad near Oroz, then to the watering place of Guepare, where they had met Nacho and Manuel. The four of them brought in one sparrowhawk and one jack rabbit.

The women dressed the quail, hawk, rabbit, squirrel, and snake, and put them all in a single pot for stew. During the day they had found rocks suitable for a *metate* and a *mano*, had ground cornmeal, and had cooked fresh *tortillas*.

After supper Teta asked Nacho, "Did you see any signs of Mexicans camping at Guepare?"

"Not recently. Yaquis were there two or three days ago."

"How many?"

"Twenty-two."

"How did you know the number?"

"By the sticks they roasted their meat on. Yaquis cook their meat on sticks held over the fire. There were as many people as sticks."

"I had forgotten the practice," said Teta. "What kind of meat did they cook?"

"Coyote. The bones and hide were left."

Teta said, "Tomorrow we will leave Primero and Otero at the camp, Anselmo and Paroy will explore and hunt to the spring at Chinipove to the southeast, Manuel and José to Huizabampo, Anastacio and Chino north to Chunanacote, and Nacho and Miguel to Bejalbampo to the northwest."

"With your permission, I would like to go on a four- or five-day trip to the west," said Nacho. "I want to go around the rim as far as Bejoribampo."

"Very well. I will go with Miguel to Bejalbampo," said Teta.

Nacho was gone seven days instead of five. When he returned, Teta said, "We were beginning to have concern for you."

"There was no cause. I was getting information which will be useful."

"About what?"

"The trains on the railroad."

"What did you learn?"

"When they run, where they slow down, the number of guards, and where there are places of concealment along the track."

"You still want to hold up a train?"

"Yes."

"We will give it consideration. It will take many more men and much planning."

"There is another matter I want to talk with you about. Let us go to the lookout point," said Nacho.

They went up the ladder which Primero had made. Chino was keeping the watch. Teta said, "Chino, we will take your place if you wish to go down."

"It is well," said Chino, and went away.

Nacho took a red handkerchief from one of his pockets, carefully unfolded it, and laid it on the ground. It contained a tiny bit of gold dust, perhaps a fourth of a teaspoonful.

"Is it gold?" Teta asked.

"Yes."

"You are sure?"

"Yes. I worked for a while at the old mine near Torocobampo. I know gold when I see it."

"How did you find it?"

"I killed a rabbit in the valley south of Bejoribampo. I pulled up a clump of dead weeds to start a fire to cook the rabbit; there were grains of gold in the dirt on the roots. I cooked the rabbit, then began washing the sand in the palm of my hand and using the water from my canteen. When the canteen was empty, I would go to the water hole at Bejoribampo to refill. In two days I got this much gold."

"This is both a good and a bad thing," said Teta. "If we can keep the location a secret and wash out enough gold to buy food and to send to Arizona for ammunition, it will be good. But if the discovery becomes known, it will be very bad. Mexican and American prospectors will move into our mountains, a strong Mexican garrison will be

stationed at every watering place, and it will be the end of what independence the Yaquis still have."

"White men go crazy when gold is found."

"Nacho, you and I will go to the place and work a few days to learn how important it may be. While we are there, we will make plans for taking the train."

Nacho's eyes sparkled.

"Do you think we can do the train?"

"It is possible. What will we need to work the gold?"

"One or two five-gallon water cans, and either a pan or a pottery bowl."

"We have only one water can and one bowl in camp and both are needed here," said Teta.

"I have friends in Vicam Station. I will go tonight and arrange for our needs," said Nacho.

"But if you bring the can and bowl here, it will still be obvious."

"I will meet you at noon tomorrow at Guepare."

"It is well. Before you leave, take some food. When did you last eat?"

"Yesterday."

"Primero's wife will give you stew."

The next morning Teta called the men together and said, "Today I am going to meet Nacho at Guepare. We are going to make plans for taking a train, and will be gone several days. While I am away, Primero will arrange for the hunting. Also, when we take the train, we will need burros to help carry materials away. Will four men volunteer to go burro stealing on ranches to the east? There are many *ranchos* and *ranchitos* up the Yaqui River."

"I will go," said Otero.

Manuel, José, and Chino agreed to go with him.

"Good," said Teta. "Otero will be the leader."

"I want to go to Potam for my family. I will be back in two days," said Paroy.

"It is well. Bring back some corn. Also, we will need more men to rob the train. If you find some you can trust, invite them to join us. But make no mention of the train; there are many spies in the villages."

The burro-stealing party was off within an hour, carrying rifles, gourd water canteens, and bows and arrows for killing game on the way. Teta, with similar equipment, went up over the mesa toward the west.

Nacho was waiting at the spring called Guepare. He had two water cans, a carrying yoke, and a large pottery bowl.

"How did you get them?" asked Teta, knowing Nacho had no money.

Nacho smiled warily. "I borrowed them."

"What route do we take to the place of the gold?" asked Teta.

"We will keep along the outer rim of the mountains. In that way we can observe the railroad for a distance of twenty miles."

In the late afternoon they came to the top of the ridge which overlooked the lower Yaqui valley. The railroad ran at the foot of the hill not over a mile away.

"There is Oroz Switch," said Nacho, pointing toward some *carrizo* houses and cattle corrals several miles to the southeast.

Teta had never seen this section of the railroad before.

"Over there," said Nacho, "is the Mexican *cuartel* of La Pitaya where a large garrison is stationed."

Teta could see several adobe buildings; two of them were two stories in height.

Nacho pointed again at Oroz Switch. "That is one of the places where we could take the train."

"Why is it a good place?"

"It is about the same distance from the garrisons at Vicam Station and La Pitaya. It is about eight miles either way. Also, it is very near the mountains and would make our retreat easy."

"It seems like a good place," said Teta.

"But there is one difficulty."

"Which is?"

"A wagon road runs beside the railroad. Someone passing could see the holdup and hurry on to report it to one of the garrisons before we had finished with the train."

"Are there other places?" asked Teta.

"Yes, one."

"Where?"

"At La Puente, the bridge, about twelve miles northwest of here. I will show you tomorrow."

"Do you think it is better?"

"It is farther from the mountains, but the wagon road does not pass within four miles of it. Also, the thick growth near the railroad makes concealment easier."

"We will inspect the place tomorrow. Now we should think about food. We have seen nothing to shoot all day."

"There is still a little time," said Nacho, glancing at the sun.

But they did not find anything to shoot. Just before sunset they found a land terrapin. They roasted it in its shell.

The next day they kept to the right of the watering place of Guajari and went to the spring called Bronces, where they filled their canteens.



"This could be our temporary camping place if we decide on La Puente. It is about six miles to the west," said Nacho.

They went on to the top of the ridge.

"There is La Puente," said Nacho, pointing.

A bridge was plainly visible in the foreground. In the distance they could see where the rails disappeared over the horizon to the west between a long low ridge on the left and a round hill on the right. Nacho followed Teta's gaze.

"The ridge on the left is Cruz de Piedra, and the hill to the right is Boca Abierta," he said. "The white tower just to the left of the railroad, and about five miles beyond the bridge, is the watchtower of the *cuartel* at Peon."

"How large is the garrison?"

"About fifty soldiers."

"Are they mounted?"

"No, infantry."

"Where is La Pitaya from here?"

"Back there," said Nacho, pointing south.

Teta estimated the distance to be eight or ten miles.

"The wagon road winds through the organ cactus between La Pitaya and Peon," said Nacho.

"Let us go down to the bridge," said Teta.

"We can leave our water cans and bowl here and pick them up on the way back. The place of the gold is across the mesa to the east."

They concealed the equipment and went down the ridge, coming to the railroad at the curve. The top of the tower at Peon was not visible from there. Looking toward Oroz, to the southeast, they could see the shiny rails for a dozen miles.

"The late afternoon train is coming from the west," said

Nacho, pointing to smoke between Cruz de Piedra and Boca Abierta. It will not get here for some time."

"We will wait for it and see how fast it goes around this curve," said Teta.

They went on to the bridge, which was not much of a bridge. Perhaps a hundred feet long, its trestle stood the height of a man over the dry stream bed.

The thick growth of organ cactus, saguaro, and mesquite came near the bed of the railroad on both sides of the *arroyo*. The men went back to the curve.

"I will hide on the south side of the track and count the guards on that side as the train goes by. You conceal yourself on the north and count them on that side. Also, try to determine the number of people in the passenger coaches at the rear."

The train was in sight now, belching black smoke which the strong west wind carried ahead. Teta could hear the puffing of the exhaust and the clanking of the loose rods on the drivers.

The engineer slowed down for the bridge and curve; the train was not going more than ten miles an hour as it passed Teta. The guards were atop the first boxcar behind the locomotive. Two sat at the front of the car, dangling their legs between the car and the tender. Three were sitting along the side, with their feet over the edge. All had their rifles across their laps. Three stood on the walkway, their rifles swung across their shoulders by the straps. Both doors of the car were open, and a lieutenant was sitting on a box between them. Some *mujeres* of the soldiers were cooking on charcoal braziers in either end of the car.

Behind the guards were nineteen boxcars, a baggage, express, and mail coach, and two passenger coaches, the

last of which was a Pullman. The freight cars had once been painted maroon, but the paint was scaling off, leaving exposed patches of weathered gray boards. The antiquated wooden passenger coaches, with steps leading to open platforms, were a battered dark green. Teta estimated that both coaches were nearly filled.

The train clanged and banged around the curve, then began to pick up speed.

"How many guards on your side?" asked Teta as he and Nacho came from the brush.

"Seven."

"That does not count the two in front?"

"No."

"That makes fifteen soldiers besides the lieutenant."

"It is about the same number I counted when I was here before," said Nacho.

"Did the trains you saw pass about this time of day?" asked Teta.

"Yes, more or less."

Teta looked at the sun. "It is about two hours until sunset. That is good. It will give us time to take the train and get to the mountains before dark and before the Mexican troops arrive."

"How long will it take to do the train?" asked Nacho.

"Perhaps an hour."

"Will it not take longer? There will be many people to kill."

"We will not kill many people, Nacho. Only the guards, and anyone else who makes resistance. We will take what the passengers have, but will not harm them unless it is necessary."

"But they will be Mexicans!"

"We should not hold all Mexicans responsible for what has happened to us. Some of them are sympathetic."

"If we leave any alive, they will get word to the garrison at Peon, and the soldiers will soon be after us," said Nacho with fervor.

"They will be after us anyway, and killing the crew and the passengers will not prevent it," said Teta.

"If we let the crew live, they will back the train to Peon, and the troops will come before we get to the top of the first ridge."

"That will not happen. I now have a plan which, with God's help, should work."

Again Teta looked at the sun. "We had better start to the mountains. The sun has almost set."

"But wait, there is a rabbit."

"Where?"

"In that clump of *cena cactus*," said Nacho, unslinging his bow.

"Let us both shoot at the same time. Maybe one of us will hit," said Teta.

"It is well."

Teta got his bow ready. "One, two, three," he whispered. Two arrows hit the rabbit.

"Our supper!" said Nacho, with a grin.

The next morning they crossed a high mesa and went down the east side to the spring at Bejoribampo, the Water of the Gila Monster. Here they filled their water cans and canteens before going up the draw to the southeast to the place of the gold. The amount of dirt Nacho had worked was negligible, one could almost carry it in a bandanna handkerchief.

"If your gold came from this amount of dirt, it should be a very rich mine," said Teta.

Eagerly they began digging in the sandy soil with their dirklime knives. Nacho, who knew of such matters, got the bowl and began washing. He shook, cradled, tilted the

bowl, and poured off the water and the sand. In the bottom were grains of gold. They worked without stopping until, in the afternoon, the water cans were empty.

"We will go for water and hunt along the way," said Teta. "We have not eaten today."

As they came near the spring, Nacho said, "We must approach with much caution. Some animal or bird may be drinking at the water hole."

A survey from the bushes revealed a lone chaparral bird, or road runner, at the edge of the water. Carefully they aimed their arrows. Nacho's hit, Teta's missed.

"We eat again," said Nacho.

When, at the end of the day, they collected the gold particles into a pile they had a half ounce, including what Nacho had previously washed.

"This is enough gold to buy six boxes of cartridges in Tucson," said Teta.

"Tomorrow we will do better," said Nacho.

Late in the night Teta was awakened by a small sound; lying very quietly and listening, he heard something moving nearby. The moon was shining, but there was no evidence of daybreak. He turned his head cautiously, Nacho had raised himself on his elbow and was looking toward the ashes of the campfire. Following Nacho's gaze, he saw a large skunk with a wide white stripe down his back, sniffing the bones of the chaparral bird. Nacho got on his hands and knees and crawled slowly toward the skunk, which continued sniffing the bones, tail erect, unaware of the men. When Nacho was within arm's length, he caught the animal by its tail and quickly lifted it off the ground. Walking to his rifle, he held the skunk by the tail in one hand, struck him at the base of the skull with the barrel of the rifle, then continued holding him off the ground until

he stopped quivering. Seeing that Teta was awake, he said, "This will be our food tomorrow."

"Will we be able to eat it?" asked Teta.

"Yes. It will not be bad. If you lift their back feet off the ground before they let go their scent, they are unable to throw it. They must have both hind legs on the ground before they can let it go."

Nacho skinned and dressed the skunk and hung it in a tree.

The next day they took about half as much gold as the first day. The third day yielded a smaller amount. Their food was a bull snake which came crawling by the camp in the early morning. On the fourth day they took only a trace of gold, and on the fifth and sixth days none at all. The fourth day they had nothing to eat; on the fifth they found two ground squirrels and an iguana. On the sixth they killed another chaparral bird at the spring. That day they worked in a circle completely around the original place of discovery.

Teta said, "We have run out of the deposit. It may go down, but it does not extend outward. Perhaps we have all that was here. This soil was evidently deposited by water in times of flood. The gold may have come from somewhere up on the edge of the mesa."

"Let us find where it came from," said Nacho.

"Some day we will come back and look for it. In the meantime let us tell no one about it."

"How much gold have we?" asked Nacho.

"Enough to buy ten or twelve boxes of cartridges," said Teta.

The next morning Teta said, "Before we return to camp, let us go up on the mesa to the west and see if we can find a place to hide some of the loot we will get from the train."



We will have more than we can carry to the camp in one trip."

The top of the mesa offered no possibilities, so they began searching along the rim of the eastern edge. Soon they found a small cave.

"This will do," said Teta. "It can be approached from the top across solid rock. The area around the mouth of the cave is covered with slide rocks which will leave no sign."

"We could wall up the opening with rock," said Nacho.

"That would probably attract more attention than leaving it open. We will have to hope that no one will approach the cave from the front."

"It may be best," said Nacho.

When Teta and Nacho arrived at Buatachive, the burro-stealing party had returned to camp with eight burros.

"These are all we could find," said Otero. "We had to go a great distance for them. The mountain Yaquis have been eating them for a long time."

"These will do," said Teta.

Paroy had returned, bringing his family. With him had come two other men, Rafael and Quino, with their families, and Lucero, who was alone. In all, there were sixteen new people to be fed.

Rafael and Quino were average Yaquis in size, appearance, and manner, but Lucero was taller and broader of shoulder, with an arrogant bearing. Teta regarded him closely and concluded the man would bear watching. Lucero, who was older than Teta, had been equally interested in inspecting him.

Teta reminded the three men what joining the band would entail and what life in the mountains would be like.

"Do you still want to join us?" he concluded.

"I will join," said Lucero, with a trace of insolence in his voice.

"So will I," said Rafael.

"I will stay," said Quino.

"Good, that will make us fourteen men with rifles," said Teta. Then he called all the men together and told them about the plan to rob the train. "We still do not have enough men," he added.

"How many will we need?" said Rafael.

"Not less than twenty, twenty-five would be better."

"We should be able to get others," said Otero.

"How much food did you bring from Potam?" Teta asked Paroy.

"Enough to last this group a week."

"With what we can kill it should last two weeks. By that time the moon will be right for holding up the train."

"How will the moon affect holding up the train? I thought it would be done in the late afternoon," said Primero.

"We need a night when the moon rises about an hour after dark. This will give us time to get over the first ridge of the mountains while it is dark, then when the moon comes up we will be able to travel faster."

"That makes sense," said Primero.

"Our attack depends on four things," said Teta, "the train being on time, a strong west wind, the moon being right, and having enough men."

"We might ask another band to join with us just for the attack," said Primero.

"That is not good," said Teta.

"Why not?" said Primero.

"Another band would have its own leader. His men would look to him for directions. If the holdup is to be

successful, it must be planned, timed, and carried off with precision. If there were two leaders, the orders could become confused and cause the undertaking to fail."

"That is most true. There should be but one band and one leader," said Anselmo.

"I agree," said Primero, "but where can we get ten or twelve more men?"

"I have a plan," said Otero. "I can go back to Bacum, Primero to Torim, and Paroy to Potam. We can each find four or five men who will be willing to join us for only a few days and help with the holdup."

"Your plan has merit, but you could not tell them in the villages about the train," said Teta.

"We need not mention the train. We could tell the men we have a campaign planned which will offer much excitement and profit, that they can take part and not be gone from home more than a week."

"The idea is good. What do you think, Primero?"

"I believe it will work."

"Will you go to Torim?"

"Yes."

"What about you, Paroy?"

"I will go."

"You may ask the men to be here on the tenth night from today. One of us will meet them at the spring."

In three days Otero, Primero, and Paroy were back. They had the promise of fourteen men. Otero and Primero brought back small sacks of corn; Paroy, a few kilos of beans.

"Did you see Avalardo?" Teta asked Primero, taking him aside.

"Yes. He gave me the corn."

"What has happened about the woodcutters?"

"The General is still investigating. He has decided it was done by one of the mountain bands. Some think Chepa did it. However, he has heard about you and is trying to find out what became of you."

"Has anyone else in our band been suspected?"

"Not that Avalardo knows about."

"Did you tell Avalardo about the train?"

"No."

"That is well. He would like to go with us, but it is best that he be in the village the day we take the train."

"Tomás is one of the men who will come from Torim," said Primero.

"There is another matter. How long have you known Lucero?" asked Teta.

"Many years."

"Can he be trusted?"

"I believe so. He is not a *yoricoyote*. Why do you ask?"

"I have found him stubborn, and reluctant to take orders."

"That is because he has ambitions. He wants to be a leader himself."

"Why is he not a leader, then?"

"Men will not follow him."



## CHAPTER 6

HUNTING had been bad for days before the new men arrived from the villages. The supply of corn and frijoles had dwindled faster than Teta had intended. On the night before the men were due, Primero's wife told Teta that there were only a few kilos of corn and no frijoles left.

"Then cook only one *tortilla* for each person. We must save the corn for the women and children to use while we are gone. The men coming from the villages tomorrow may bring food. If not, we will kill one of the burros."

The next morning thirteen of the promised fourteen men were at the spring. Primero went down and guided them to the shelter. Teta had never seen any of them except Tomás before. He talked with each one, inspected his rifle, asked how much ammunition he had, and how much food he had brought. The men were in their twenties and thirties, and all appeared to have stamina. The rifles were of assorted makes and calibers. The number of cartridges ranged from five to thirty each. The food was disappoint-

ing. Some had brought none; a few, cold *tortillas*; others carried parcels of dry corn or frijoles. Among them there was enough to feed the entire band for a day.

When Teta had appraised each of the new arrivals, he called them together with all the members of his band except Rafael, who was at the lookout point.

He explained to the new men about the train. Impassive and silent, they gave close attention. "We will capture it day after tomorrow, if it is on time and if the wind is right. We will leave here today in small parties of not more than three to a group. There is little food, and each man will have to hunt. The parties should scatter out widely. Tomorrow night we will reassemble at the spring called Bronces. Do all of you know where it is?"

Seven of the younger men did not know.

"Then be sure to get in a party with someone who does know," Teta said.

"We need two men to stay here and guard the camp. Both will share equally with the rest of us in what we take from the train. Who will stay?"

A silence ensued. No one volunteered. As Teta looked from one to another, he was outwardly stolid, but inwardly he was deeply puzzled as to how this might be arranged.

Primeró's wife came to his aid. "We do not need men to stay with us. The women can manage the camp and keep the lookout, too."

"What would you do if a company of Mexican soldiers came to the spring?" asked Teta.

"We would watch them closely. If they camped at the spring, or if they seemed to be looking for Yaquis, we would go up over the mesa to Guepare."

"Do you know the way?"

"Yes."

"Primeró, do you think the women can care for themselves?"

"Yes."

"Anselmo?"

"Yes."

"Paroy?"

"I think so."

The other three men with families also agreed.

"That will give us two more men for the train, and we will need them," said Teta. "We must kill one of the burros and leave the meat for the women. The loss of the burro will be offset by the two additional men."

"We need now to have an understanding about the loot," he continued. "Every man will share equally of all materials except food. Food will belong to the band and will not be allotted. The other things, money, clothing, guns, ammunition, everything, will be divided after we return here."

"Who will drive the burros to Bronces?" asked Primeró.

"I will," said Otero, "and I wish there were going to be eight instead of seven."

"If you miss one so much, the *rancheros* must be very sad over losing eight," smiled Teta.

"Primeró, you and Nacho will help me slaughter a burro for the women."

Food would have been meager when the men arrived at Bronces had not one party managed to kill two javelinas from a pack encountered during the day.

The next day Teta's main concern was the wind, which usually started blowing from the Gulf of California about noon, increased in velocity until past midafternoon, then began tapering off.

In the early afternoon he called the men together and

said, "The wind is not blowing hard enough today. Our gunfire could be heard at Peon. We must postpone taking the train until tomorrow, which may be better; we will have a chance to practice the attack. We will go to La Puente, decide where each man is to be stationed and what he is to do. We will then hide beside the track and watch the train pass. Everyone can see what it will be like."

"It is a wise thing to do," said Primero, and there were many affirmative nods.

"It is a foolish thing to do! There is no need for a rehearsal. We should capture the train today," said a voice edged with contempt.

Teta turned and saw that the speaker was Lucero.

"Why do you say that?" he asked.

"Because you are too cautious. You have had no experience in holding up trains."

"Have you?"

"Yes. Several. There is no danger."

"There is much risk when there are two Mexican garrisons within a few miles of the holdup; they may be alerted by the sound of the guns."

Lucero, holding his rifle in both hands, turned from Teta to the men. "This man ambushed some woodcutters in the dark, and now he thinks he is a leader. He made big plans to hold up a train; now, when the time has come, he loses his nerve and blames it on the wind. A brave leader, this newcomer! I say we capture the train today. Follow me, and we will take it."

Teta was taking the measure of Lucero. His own rifle hung by its strap on his back, behind his left shoulder. When Lucero ceased speaking, Teta stepped in front of him and deliberately struck him in the face with his hand. The hard, quick blow spun Lucero around. Regaining his

balance, he aimed his rifle at Teta, but the muzzle of Nacho's rifle was pressing against his ribs.

"Put it down," ordered Nacho.

Lucero lowered his gun and looked murderously at Nacho.

"Take his rifle," said Teta.

Anselmo took it. Teta handed his own to Primero.

"Lucero," he said quietly, motioning for the men to stand back, "let us decide who is leader of this band."

An evil gleam came into Lucero's eyes. He glanced at the men standing near Teta; their faces were impassive, their eyes cold. From only two of the new men did he detect encouragement.

The fighters crouched and circled slowly, each looking for an advantage. They appeared evenly matched. Lucero was heavier and his arms were longer, but Teta was quicker and more agile.

Lucero lunged and they locked bodies, heaving, each trying to throw the other down. Lucero's weight overpowered Teta, and he fell under the older man. Lucero then went to work with his hands and teeth. He gouged at Teta's eyes, twisted his ears, and pounded his nose until blood gushed. He got Teta's left ear in his teeth and clamped down with all his might. Teta jabbed a thumb in Lucero's eye and forced him to let go; all the while he squirmed and twisted in a desperate effort to turn Lucero over. Lucero threw his right leg out to hold his balance; quickly Teta brought his left knee up with a kick in Lucero's groin. The blow paralyzed Lucero momentarily. Teta pushed Lucero's body up with his hands, drew both knees to his chest, planted his feet in Lucero's belly, and with an outward thrust sent him hurtling through the air to land on his back. Lucero was on his feet almost by the time he came up, he drew a knife from inside

his shirt. He charged at Teta, who side-stepped. Before Lucero could turn, Teta landed a kick on the hand holding the knife. The blade flew through the air, going over the heads of the spectators.

"Now fight evenly," yelled Nacho.

Lucero glanced quickly at the ground, looking for a rock or a stick. Teta took advantage of this distraction and gave him a staggering fist blow on the jaw. Lucero recovered his balance and crouched for another charge. Teta's ear, face, and nose were bleeding profusely. He was partially blinded, and his shirt was soaked with blood. Lucero decided to risk a flying tackle, a highly effective tactic if successful, in an effort to win a quick victory. He lunged, but Teta evaded and Lucero landed face downward, full length on the ground. The fall knocked the breath from him. Teta pounced on his back and shoulders, grabbed Lucero by the hair, and savagely pounded his head against the ground until he was unconscious.

As Teta stood up, Nacho raised his gun. "Let me shoot this *hijo de puta*!" Nacho used Spanish for his profanity; the language was richer than Yaqui in that respect.

Teta grabbed the barrel of Nacho's rifle. "No. We will need him tomorrow when we capture the train. I think he knows now who is the leader."

Nacho relaxed, eased the stock of his rifle to the ground, and stood looking at Lucero. Minutes passed before the man on the ground stirred. Slowly he turned over, raised himself to a sitting position with his legs stretched in front of him, and braced himself with his arms behind. He looked at Teta, at Nacho, then at each of the men; there was no encouragement in any face. Groggily he said, "I was mistaken. It is better to wait until tomorrow to capture the train."

"If that is settled," said Teta, staunching the flow of blood from his nose, "we will now leave for La Puente."

Teta took his rifle from Primero, stopped at the spring long enough to wash his face, and started toward the west. All the men except Lucero followed him up the ridge; Lucero remained sitting on the ground, looking unseeingly at his feet.

Primero, observing that he evidently had no intention of going with the party, said to Teta, "Do you think we should leave him here?"

"No. He must go with us. Nacho, bring him along."

Nacho returned to Lucero, who had not been given back his rifle, prodded the would-be leader, and said, "Get up, *cabrón*. You are going, too."

Lucero rose unsteadily to his feet. Nacho urged him with a kick from behind.

"Get going, you *hijo de la chingada*."

Lucero started walking slowly behind the men, holding his swelling wrist. The rest of the day he remained apart, silent and sulky. The others ignored him.

When the band reached La Puente, smoke from the afternoon train could be seen rising high in the air between Cruz de Piedra and Boca Abierta. Teta pointed out where the road block would be placed, about where the locomotive would stop, and where the guards' car would be. He placed Anselmo, Paroy, and five new men on the south side of the track opposite where the guards' car would stop. Manuel, Anastacio, and six new men were stationed across from them on the north side of the track. The men on both sides were concealed at intervals dictated by the desert growth. Teta explained to each man what he would do.

He selected Tomás and Rafael to climb into the cab and

cover the engineer and the fireman. Then he found places near the track for them to hide until the locomotive passed them.

"You are to be in the cab before the train stops," he told them. "As soon as the firing ceases, march both men back to the last coach where the passengers will be."

Teta then took the remainder of the men back to where the express and passenger coaches would stop, seventeen to twenty boxcar lengths behind the locomotive. Each man was instructed as to what he would do. Some were to board the passenger coaches, march the passengers out, and line them up on the north side; others were to guard each side of the train to make sure no one got away; Chino and Lucero were to guard the rear of the train. A place was found for Otero's burros. The smoke of the train was now between Peon and La Puente.

"The train will be here in a few minutes," Teta called to the men. "All of you conceal yourselves and imagine what it will be like tomorrow when we really stop the train."

In a few seconds not a Yaqui was visible. Teta hurried back to where the men who were to deal with the guards and the locomotive were hidden. He took his place with the group on the south side of the track. Here he would be on the inside of the curve with a better vantage point.

The puffing of the locomotive could now be heard. A rattling rumble indicated the train was crossing the bridge. A decrease in the tempo of the exhaust signified that the engineer was slowing down for the curve. The locomotive went by. On the guards' car, the little soldiers with their ill-fitting khaki uniforms were sitting or standing. Inside the car, little, dirty, barefooted *soldaderas*, wearing ragged dresses and faded *rebozos* were hunched

over charcoal braziers. Sitting on a box between the doors was a well-fed, oily-skinned lieutenant, picking his teeth.

When the train had passed, Teta assembled the men who were now filled with suppressed excitement.

"Tomorrow you men at the rear of the train will look out for the expressman, who will be armed. He will hear the firing at the front and may start shooting from concealment, or he may try to escape into the brush. Do not let him or anyone else get away to give the alarm. If he does not attempt to run away, Anselmo and Manuel will go back and deal with him as soon as the train guards are eliminated. The conductor and the brakeman will probably be in one of the passenger coaches."

"What about the burros?" asked one of the new men. "Will not the noise of the train and the gunfire cause them to run away?"

"Burros never get excited," replied Otero. "They will be where I leave them."

"You will line the passengers up outside the coaches on the north side, make them take off their clothes and throw them out in front," Teta instructed the men assigned to the coaches.

"You mean that they shall take off everything?" asked Primero.

"Everything. Our people need clothing."

"That includes everybody?"

"Everyone."

"What about the *mujeres* of the soldiers?"

"Bring them back and take their clothes."

The prospect of taking away the clothes of eighty or a hundred people did not seem unusual to anyone in the band.

"Caution everyone before they start taking their clothes



off not to put their hands in their pockets. Everything in their pockets is to remain there. The clothes are to be made into bales and tied tightly."

"We will need rope," said Primero.

"There will be rope in the express coach or in some of the freight cars. When the guards are killed, the men at the front will force the doors of the boxcars open."

"How?" asked one of the new men.

"There will be tools in the cab of the locomotive. I will throw them out for you."

"What will happen to the train and its people when we leave?" asked Paroy.

"We will derail the locomotive so they cannot move the train. Nacho and Quino will stay here and guard the people until sunset. It will take an hour after that for someone to go to Peon, and another hour for the soldiers to get here. By that time we will be over the ridge, on trails the soldiers cannot follow. We will not go directly back to Bronces, but northeast toward Tetacombiate. We want our trail from here to lead toward the northern part of the Bacatetes. At the top of the first mesa, where tracks will not show on the rock, we will turn sharply to the south. We want the Mexicans to think we have scattered and are going north. We will go in that direction now, and tomorrow we will take the same trail to the top of the mesa. That will double the number of tracks from here to the mesa and make the Mexicans think we are twice as many."

With long, swinging strides, Teta led the way toward Tetacombiate, going decidedly north of northeast. When he reached the top of the mesa, he waited for the men to come up.

"At this place the Mexicans will lose our trail. Otero will drive the burros across the rocks to a cave about two miles to the southeast. There we will cache the food the

burros will be carrying, and Otero will drive them back here and on to the north, leaving a plain trail. He should be in the hills between Tetacombiate and Zamahaca by daylight. Then he will abandon the burros and work his way back to Buatachive. The Mexicans will be looking for us in that direction while we are going southeast. Anselmo and I will now go with Otero to show him where the cave is. The rest of you can keep along the top of the mesa to Bronces."

Considerable excitement and gaiety prevailed around the fire that night. The men roasted their portions of the last javelina. There were jokes, banter, and an occasional Yaqui song. They were exhilarated by the prospects of battle, even though they expected it to be a very one-sided battle with the Yaquis shooting from ambush and trapping the Mexican guards. Only the expressman would have a chance to return their fire. But if the odds were in their favor this time, it would only partially make up for other times when the conditions had been reversed.

Lucero, who had not said a word since his attempt to take over the band, remained apart, brooding and disgruntled.

Teta took Primero aside. "Do you think Lucero will leave tonight?"

"I do not think so."

"He has lost face, and his resentment is bitter."

"If he stays, he will share in the loot. That will do much to offset his injured pride."

"We cannot let him leave until after the holdup. He could betray us."

At daybreak Primero came to where Teta was sleeping. He touched him on the shoulder and Teta sat up quickly.

"What goes?" he asked.

"Lucero is gone."

"When do you think he left?"

"He was here an hour ago."

"This is serious. He may turn *yoricoyote* and warn the Mexicans of our plan."

"The reward would probably be greater than his part of the goods from the train."

"Awaken Nacho and bring him here."

When Nacho had been told of Lucero's departure, Teta said, "If he is bent on betrayal, he will go either to the garrison at Peon or the one at La Pitaya. He could not get to Vicam Switch in time to warn the Mexicans there. Primero, you go toward Peon with all speed possible. If you do not overtake him or find his trail, go as near the *cuartel* as you can and observe what happens there. If you see anything which indicates the garrison has been warned, come back and report. If there is nothing unusual, meet us at La Puente at midafternoon. Nacho, you do the same for La Pitaya."

"If the Mexicans are warned, they will set a trap for us at La Puente," said Nacho.

"It is important to overtake Lucero. Bring him back if you can; if you cannot, make sure he does not get to either garrison."

"Lucero will not get to La Pitaya," said Nacho.

He set off at a trot in the early dawn, going southwest. Primero went up the ridge toward La Puente.

Throughout the forenoon Teta concealed his anxiety. He considered all the things that might happen if Lucero warned the Mexicans. They might make a counterattack while the holdup was in progress. This would have to be done by the garrisons from Peon and La Pitaya. Such plans should be detected by Primero and Nacho. Another possibility was that a heavy guard might be sent with the

train, perhaps on fortified flatcars pushed in front of the locomotive. Another alternative would be to hold the train at Guaymas and not run it on schedule. Although he was careful not to let his men know, he was restless and perturbed all during the morning. He walked to the top of the ridge where he could see La Puente and La Pitaya and spent hours scanning the slopes to the west hoping to see Primero or Nacho returning. In the early afternoon he went down to the camp, not sure whether the venture of the train would be an ambush for the Mexicans or for the Yaquis.

The men knew that Lucero, Primero, and Nacho were away from camp, but Teta did not mention the reason for their absence although he knew the men suspected it.

A hard, steady wind was blowing from the west, and the usual crisp clearness of the sky was giving way to a dusty haze.

Teta looked at the sky and said, "The wind is going to be right today. We will go to La Puente and collect cross-ties for the road block."

The crossties were scattered along the track at twenty-to-thirty-foot intervals. As the men carried them to the place of the road block, Teta said, "Pile them here, beside the track."

Anselmo said, "Why not make the block now? It will save moving the ties again."

Teta replied, "It is two hours until the train is due. In the meantime a freight train might come from the east, and we would have to hold up the wrong train."

"I should have thought of that," said Anselmo.

When the ties had been gathered from a distance of a quarter of a mile, Teta said, "These should be sufficient. When we see smoke to the west, we will make the block quickly."

The wind had increased and the overcast of haze had deepened. Teta kept watching the sky and casting anxious glances toward the west.

"If the wind blows too hard, the guards will be inside the car instead of on top. That will greatly complicate matters and take us much longer."

"That would be bad," said Manuel.

"Let us practice getting to our positions," said Teta. He wanted to give the men something to do, as well as to keep his own mind off the uncertainties of the next few hours. Within two minutes not a Yaqui was visible. Teta went around the curve, checking each man's position. He went back to the crossties, whistled, and in an instant the road-bed was covered with Yaquis. When the men reassembled, Primero was with them.

"You did not need the practice," Teta said to the men.

Then he called to Primero and walked a short distance along the track to the east.

"What did you learn?"

"There was no sign of Lucero and no unusual activity at Peon," replied Primero.

"That is good," said Teta, relieved.

"Is Nacho back?"

"No," said Teta, his mouth setting in a grim line.

"There is smoke," called Manuel.

So it was, hanging low to the ground between Cruz de Piedra and Boca Abierta.

"Let us make the road block," said Teta.

In a few moments it was done; a solid mass of timber the height of a man lay across the track.

"No locomotive can plow through that," said Nacho, who had stepped unseen from the desert jungle.

"Nacho!" called Teta, moving quickly toward him. "How did it go?"

"Lucero did not get to La Pitaya, and he will not be back."

"You remove a weight from my mind," said Teta.

"You have afforded me a satisfactory morning," replied Nacho.

Noticing Teta's black eye, his bruised mouth, and his swollen ear, Nacho inquired, "Can you see to shoot?"

"There is nothing wrong with my aiming eye," Teta replied with a grin.

The men, standing along the tracks, now knew what had happened to Lucero.

"Get to your places," Teta called to the men, filled with new assurance. "It will not be long."

As the train came clanging and hissing across the bridge, the smoke was carried before it, making a screen which blotted out the cars behind. The locomotive was almost even with him before Teta could see the guards' car. The guards were on top. He glanced back to the locomotive at the instant the engineer saw the road block. With his left hand he closed the throttle, and with his right he set the air brakes. The fireman, who could not see the road block from his side of the cab, was mystified. The engineer did not blow the whistle to alert the guards until after he had set the brakes.

One guard, seeing the road block, shouted, "*Un ataque!*"

The lieutenant was sitting inside the car, between the doors. At the noise of the air brakes, the whistle, and the outcry above, he jumped up and started toward the door on Teta's side, drawing his pistol as he went. Teta's bullet struck him in the chest. His momentum carried him through the door, and he tumbled to the ground head first.

In a moment not a guard was left, except one who was eating inside the car. He rushed to the door, saw Tomás run forward toward the cab, and shot him in the back. As



Tomás fell, Teta shot the guard, who pitched through the door, falling on top of the lieutenant.

Teta ran to the cab. Rafael was already there, climbing up from the opposite side.

"You take the fireman, and I will cover the engineer," called Teta. "Where is the tool box?" he asked the engineer.

"There," said the engineer, pointing.

"Where is the derailing tool?"

"Over there, in the corner."

"Now, keep your hands up and get to the ground on the north side of the train."

Teta called to one of the new men, "March these two men back to the coaches. If they try to run, shoot them," he said in Spanish.

He opened the tool box and threw the tools out, some on either side. As he dropped off the car on the north side, Paroy came hurrying to him.

"We have the soldiers' *mujeres*."

"How many?"

"Four."

"Take them to the rear."

The new men had already examined the guards to make sure they were all dead, and had collected their rifles and ammunition belts.

"Pile the rifles over there," said Teta. "We will see about them later. Now get the tools and break into the boxcars."

Teta ran back along the train, looking under and between the cars to be sure no brakeman was hiding there. When he reached the express coach, the expressman appeared in the door, his hands up; behind him, his rifle muzzle in the expressman's back, stood Anselmo.

"I will take care of him," said Teta.

The train was still moving when Nacho jumped onto the front steps of the Pullman. As he reached the top step, the conductor, holding a shotgun, appeared in the door. Nacho was the quicker, shooting from his hip. Stepping over the fallen conductor, he entered the coach.

A woman screamed, "Yaquis!" and collapsed. Hysteria and panic enveloped other women.

A Mexican general was sitting on the second seat, looking calmly at Nacho and thinking what a fool he had been to put his pistol in his handbag. When Nacho saw the general, he shot him; it was more reflex than calculation. An American cattle buyer was taking a revolver from his suitcase.

"Put it down," said Nacho, bringing his rifle to bear on the American.

"Hands up, everybody!" shouted Quino.

By this time he was behind Nacho, who walked to the rear of the coach.

"Stand up and start moving to the front," yelled Nacho, turning quickly. "No harm will come if you do as you are told. Go out the front door, down the steps on the left, and line up beside the coach. Keep your hands up and do not put them in your pockets!"

Throughout the coach the rustling of silk, the bobbing of egret feathers on womens' hats, and the clicking of tiny heels contrasted with the movement of somber broadcloth, the adjusting of felt hats, and the stamping of boot heels, as the passengers complied with Nacho's orders.

At the same instant, Primero and Miguel appeared at the front and rear doors of the other coach.

Primero shouted, "Put your hands up!"

Forty pairs of hands went up, big, hardened, calloused

hands; smaller, overworked, docile hands; and tiny, smooth, dirt-stained hands.

The train had stopped.

Forty pairs of dark, somber eyes regarded Primero with an impassive stare; there was no panic, no resistance, only stolid compliance.

"Go out the rear door and line up on the north side of the coach," Primero ordered.

The aisle was filled with sandaled feet, and straw hats of working men, faded *rebozos* and bedraggled skirts of working women, and the bare, soiled feet of dark, cherub-faced children.

When Teta reached the rear of the first passenger coach, herding the expressman ahead of him, the passengers were filing out of both coaches. In the door of the Pullman, the conductor lay sprawled in a pool of blood, his shotgun beside him. The passengers were stepping over him. Nacho's loud voice could be heard from inside the Pullman, telling the passengers to keep moving.

Teta gave the expressman over to Otero and went back to the express coach. Anselmo and Manuel were looking through baggage, mail, and express. Teta climbed in and went to a small iron safe in the end of the coach.

"The express company often transports money. Let us see if the safe is locked," he said.

"The expressman was kneeling in front of that thing when I found him," said Anselmo.

Teta turned the knob and the door opened. "He did not have time to lock it," he said, "or perhaps he was unlocking it."

He took out several envelopes and a package. The package, tied with a strong string and sealed with wax, was ad-

dressed to a bank in Navajoa, and on the corner of the address sticker was the figure 2,000 pesos. Teta gave it to Anselmo.

"Take this and do not put it down nor break the seal until we get back to Buatachive."

He looked over the contents of the coach. "See what else you can find."

Teta went back toward the rear coaches. The passengers were lined up outside. Nacho was ordering them to remove their clothes. In the middle of the line was a gentle, well-dressed, respectable Mexican with a fine, intelligent face. On one side of him was his wife and on the other were two daughters, about sixteen and eighteen, all attractively dressed. When the others began removing their clothing, the man put out his hands, restraining his wife and daughters.

"This is an outrage!" he cried.

A gleam of pleasure crept into Nacho's eyes; he shot the man dead. The wife screamed and fainted, falling beside her husband. Nacho looked up and down the line to see if anyone else thought it an outrage. He was disappointed to see no hesitation.

All the clothes were now on the ground. Teta saw the broad-brimmed western felt hat of the American cattle buyer lying well out in front of the other items of clothing. He casually picked the hat up and tried it on for size. Satisfied with the fit, he flung his own battered straw hat, which he had secured in Yucatan, far into the cactus jungle. He replaced the crease in the felt hat with the pyramidal effect of Yaqui straw hats. Looking over the assortment of clothing, he saw a purple silk shirt which had belonged to a Mexican traveling man. He took off his own blood-soaked cotton *manta* shirt, which he had taken from



a dead *Zapatista* in Morelos, threw it aside, and put the silk one on.

Miguel and Quino guarded the passengers while Primero and Nacho made the scattered clothing into bales. When they finished, except for tying with rope, Primero and Nacho started back into the coaches to get the passengers' suitcases and bundles.

"Nacho," Teta called, "sleeping coaches have blankets in them. See if you can find some."

Nacho turned and stared at the transformation in Teta's appearance.

"*Caramba!*" he said, disappearing into the Pullman.

Teta went back to the front of the train. The new men had the doors of the boxcars open. Some contained farm machinery; others held lumber; others, machinery from the United States for mines, cotton gins, and factories. One car had an consignment of food sacks containing corn, frijoles, coffee berries, *chiles*, and sugar. Another car was loaded with hardware. In it were several bales of rope. Teta got into the car and rolled two bales of rope out onto the ground. One bale was small rope and the other was of larger diameter. He pulled out a quantity of the small rope and cut it off with his knife. Giving it to one of the new men, he said, "Take this back to Primero and Nacho to tie the bales and bundles."

He called another of the new men to him, "Go to the rear and take Otero's place; tell him to bring the burros up."

Motioning for two other new men, he said, "Get into that car and unload eight sacks of corn, four sacks of frijoles, one sack of sugar, and one sack of coffee berries."

Teta went forward to the stacks of guns beside the guards' car and began to examine the Mauser rifles which had belonged to the guards. He pulled the bolt of each

and looked down the inside of the barrel. Those with smooth bores he pitched in one pile; those with rifle rings showing he placed in another. Then he climbed into the guards' car and jumped out on the other side. The dead lieutenant still clutched his pistol. Teta took it, with its cartridge belt and holster. He buckled the belt around his waist and holstered the pistol. Then he examined the rifles on that side. Some of them had not been fired. Two of the new men came up. To one of them he said, "Take these rifles around to the other pile."

"What about those?" the man asked, pointing to the stack with smooth bores.

"They are not worth taking. Leave them here."

To the other man he said, "Go in the guards' car and get all the ammunition you can find."

The man apparently was not listening but was looking toward the southeast.

"There is train smoke," he said.

Teta looked and saw that it was so. "That is what I have feared, but hoped would not happen."

Climbing to the top of the car, he watched the smoke for several minutes. He looked back along the train and saw Paroy three cars down.

"Paroy, come up here quickly," he called.

When Paroy mounted the boxcar, Teta pointed out the smoke.

"Where do you think it is?" he asked.

"At Oroz Switch."

"That is about sixteen miles away?"

"Yes."

"It is either a freight or a troop train coming this way. No doubt it was taking the siding at Oroz to allow this train to pass."

While they were watching, the distant locomotive sent

a great puff of black smoke into the air, followed by a second and a third. Then the puffs began to increase in tempo.

"They have started this way," said Paroy.

"We must do something at once. Is there another switch between Oroz and here?"

"Yes, Mapoli, about eight miles from here."

"No doubt the crew has been watching the smoke of this train for some time and decided it is not moving, and are coming on to Mapoli. If this train does not move, they will know it is in trouble and come to investigate."

"That, no doubt, is their intention," said Paroy.

"They could be here in thirty minutes, long before we have finished."

"It is true."

"Then we must stop them. Have you ever worked on the railroad?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen a derailing tool used?"

"Yes."

"Go back to the rear and get the engineer and the fireman. Give them back their shoes, but not their clothes. Take one of the new men to help you and have the engineer and the fireman detach the locomotive, run it forward four or five miles, and then have them derail one of the big wheels. It will only take a few moments to derail the wheel, but hours to put it back on the track. Then bring them back on the run."

"Will we have time for that before the other train gets there?"

"I think so. Have the fireman throw in coal and make a big smoke. When the other trainmen see this locomotive moving, they will take the siding at Mapoli, but they will

not stay there long when they see this locomotive stop again. They will come on to see what the trouble is. When they get to the derailed locomotive, they will be blocked."

"We must hurry then," said Paroy.

"Yes, but the plan should give us time to finish here and get away. If we have left when you return, give the fireman and the engineer over to Nacho and Quino. We will leave two packs for you. Take them and follow the trail we went yesterday."

Paroy swung off the boxcar and ran back to get the engineer and the fireman.

Teta went to the north side of the train and met Otero driving the burros. As Otero drove the burros forward past the Pullman, he spied a woman's hat by a bundle of clothing. It was a large taupe velvet hat with a flat brim and orange egret feathers stuck around the crown. He picked up the hat, casually placed it over his own, and kept the burros moving toward the front of the train.

Teta pointed to the food sacks beside the track.

"There is your cargo," he said, "and down there is a bale of large rope."

He called some of the men to help load the burros. Otero cut ropes and made diamond hitches, a matter he well understood. Teta went back to the passenger coaches, where he found the passengers' clothes and the blankets tied in bundles the men could carry on their backs. Nacho was looking through a pile of bed sheets and pillowcases.

"What are these?" he asked.

"Yoris sleep on them," said Teta.

"Do we take them?"

"Yes. Our women can make clothes from them."

Teta picked up a pillowcase and looked at it. "They are like sacks. We will need them. Let me have them all."

He stuffed all the pillowcases into one, took the bundle to Otero, and said, "Tie this on one of the burros. We will need it at the cave."

Primero and Nacho were tying the luggage of the passengers into bales, ready for carrying. Nacho had even taken the clothes of the dead outraged father. He had not molested the wife, who was still in a faint. The daughters were standing dazed and unseeing, too stunned to know they were naked.

Teta climbed to the top of a boxcar and looked toward the southeast to assure himself that the locomotive had been derailed. Climbing down, he said to Nacho and Quino, "You will have time to hold these people here until sundown, then follow us."

Calling the other Yaquis who were near the rear of the train to him, he said, "Take all the bundles except these three and go to the burros."

He picked up the bale of clothing from the Pullman, leaving the blankets and sheets for Nacho and Quino. When he got to the burros, he assembled all the men.

"Tomás was killed by one of the guards," Teta announced.

The men who had been at the rear of the train did not know this, and they received the news in stoical silence.

After a moment Primero asked, "Where is the body?"

"Near the guards' car, on the other side of the train."

"We should bury it," said Primero.

"We must not take time now, but we can take it with us and bury it near the cave where we will cache the food," said Teta.

"I will bring it," said Primero.

Several men went with him. When they returned, Teta said, "Let us strap the body across the burden of the larg-

est burro." While this was being done, he said to Anselmo, "We will need a spade. I threw one from the tool box of the locomotive."

"What about the funeral for Tomás?" asked Primero.

"We will have it when we return to the camp at Buatachive. Otero, you can leave now with the burros."

Otero started the animals toward the north; as he plodded along behind them, the egret feathers juttled jauntily above his hat.

Teta turned back to the men. "The bundles are ready. Each man select one and leave two for Paroy and the other man. They will be back soon."

The men moved off with their loads, following the tracks of the burros. Teta waited and fell in on the trail behind them. They overtook Otero and the burros before they reached the top of the mesa.

It was dark when Teta stopped the group and said to the new men, "All of you can leave for Buatachive from here, keeping on the rocks as far as you can. The regular members of our band will stay with the burros to the cave. It is necessary for each to carry a few kilos of food in addition to what he now has. We will apportion the food at the cave."

When they reached the cave, Teta counted the pillowslips and found there were fourteen. He had the men put about five kilos of corn in eight of them, frijoles in four, coffee berries in one, and sugar in one. The remainder of the food was stacked in the cave. Otero started the burros back to the northern point of the mesa.

Teta said to the waiting men, "We will bury Tomás in the valley to the east, where the ground is soft; then we will scatter and go to Buatachive, each man by himself. We should all be there day after tomorrow morning."

It was morning, and all the men except Otero and Tomás had returned to Buatachive. The bundles were stacked in the center of the shelter. None had been opened except the pillowcases containing food. The men, tired and sleepy, were sitting or lying about. One of the women was at the lookout point.

Teta said, "Today we will rest and sleep. Tonight we will hold Tomás' funeral."

"But we have no *maestro*," said Nacho.

"Yes, one of the new men from Potam is Third *Maestro* there."

"What about *cantoras*?" asked one of the men from Bacum.

"Primero and Paroy's wives are *cantoras*."

"Any dancers?" asked another Bacum man.

"We will not have the dances, only the funeral liturgy."

By evening the men had recovered from their hunger and fatigue, and enough wood had been gathered to keep a fire going all night. The funeral chants and responses began, with the people kneeling and crossing themselves at the proper times. The liturgy went on until daybreak. When it was over, the women busied themselves with the cooking.

After sunrise Otero came in, tired and hungry, but with the egret feathers still bobbing atop his hat.

"How did it go?" asked Teta as Otero drank a bowl of strong coffee.

"At daybreak yesterday morning I left the burros in the rocky bed of a dry creek northeast of Tetacombiate. I went on up the creek for a distance, turned east across the ridge to Zamahaca, came south along the eastern rim of the mountains by the watering places of La Virgen and Culahuíhui."

When the meal was finished, Teta announced, "Now, we will divide the booty. For myself I want but a few things, my share of the money, the lieutenant's pistol, one of the Pullman blankets, and the dress, earrings, and ring which belonged to the older daughter of the man Nacho killed. As you can see," he continued, indicating his new hat and shirt, "I am no longer a *Zapatista*. The value of these things is only a portion of what each of you will get. Does anyone object?"

No one objected.

"Nacho, will you spread one of the blankets on the ground?"

When the blanket was spread, Teta said to Anselmo, "Where is the sealed package?"

Anselmo took it from inside his shirt.

"Break the seal and unwrap it."

Anselmo did so and laid a stack of currency on the blanket.

"There are supposed to be two thousand *pesos* there. I will count them," Teta said.

The amount was correct.

"Now, Nacho will untie the bundle of clothes from the Pullman, and Primero the bundle from the other coach. They will go through all pockets and purses, then put the money and valuables on the blanket."

The search yielded nine hundred and twelve *pesos* and an assortment of rings, watches, bracelets, necklaces, and lockets. There were no crosses; neither Primero nor Nacho had dared take the crosses which the passengers wore.

Teta added the nine hundred and twelve *pesos* to the two thousand and divided by twenty-six.

"Primero, count out one hundred and twelve *pesos* to each man."



When the money had been distributed, Teta said, "Primerero and Nacho will untie all the bundles and packages and will divide the contents into twenty-five piles. They will include the Mauser rifles and ammunition. Each pile will be as near equal in value as it is possible for them to make it."

It took several hours to complete the sorting, with many suggestions from the onlookers. When Primerero and Nacho announced they had done their best, Teta said, "We will now draw lots for each pile. I have twenty-five sticks of different lengths. The one who draws the longest stick will get the pile on the extreme right, the next longest stick will get the one next to it, until the shortest stick takes the last one on the left. Do you consider this a fair method?"

There were affirmative nods.

"When the drawing is over and each of you has taken your pile, you may swap items with each other until everyone is satisfied."

The trading went on all afternoon and into the night. It was like the market day of their dreams for both men and women. The next day the new men, except the Third *Maestro* from Potam, left for the villages.

The *novena* for Tomás was held on the third night after the band returned to the shelter. After the liturgy for the dead, which was done with many repetitions, a procession formed and went throughout the shelter with the Third *Maestro* sprinkling "holy" water. Day was at hand when the ceremony ended, and the shelter had been freed of Tomás' spirit. The women began patting out the day's supply of *tortillas*.

## CHAPTER 7

WHEN it was light enough to see for some distance, the lookout man called down from the cliff above, "A man and woman are at the spring."

"Are they Yaquis?"

"Yes."

"I will go," said Teta.

When he had reached the dry creek bed below, Teta saw that the newcomers were Avalardo and Lupe. He hurried to them.

"My godfather," said Teta, extending his hand.

"My son," said Avalardo.

"My godmother," said Teta, shaking hands with Lupe.

"We are glad to see you," said Avalardo.

"You are like my own father and mother," said Teta.

"We are proud of you," Lupe replied.

"You are famous throughout the eight villages. First the woodcutters, and now the train," said Avalardo.

"Is it known?"



"No one knows for sure, but there is much talk of a new man from Yucatan."

"Is it known who the members of the band are?"

"No. One person suspects one group, another suspects another. No one is certain. I know more about it than anyone else, and I do not know more than three or four of them."

"Now every man at the *guardia* considers himself an authority on holding up trains," said Lupe.

"We were sad when we learned about Tomás," said Avalardo.

"The boy had much promise," said Teta. "We gave him a good funeral and *novena*. You are tired and hungry. Shall we go to camp? We have coffee, *tortillas*, and frijoles. Since the train, we have had more food."

"Let us talk before we go," said Avalardo.

"I am anxious to learn the news from the villages. What do the people think about the train?"

"They consider it a masterful stroke," said Avalardo.

"The Yaquis have made *fiesta* ever since; much mescal, many drunks, and no work," said Lupe.

"The Mexicans in Vicam Station are uneasy and frightened, and the soldiers in the garrisons are fearful. The officers are in a rage," said Avalardo.

"They should be. Imagine the big official from Mexico City standing for hours without his clothes," said Lupe.

"He considered it a great indignity," said Avalardo.

"Who was this high official?" asked Teta.

"The Secretary of War."

"How did you learn?"

"We have our spies, too," said Avalardo. "We have a man in the General's office in Esperanza. The Mexicans think he is an ardent *yoricoyote*, but he is our man."

"We did not see any high official. There was a general, but Nacho shot him."

"The Secretary was not in uniform," said Avalardo.

"Without his clothes, he looked like anyone else," said Lupe.

"Did you learn what happened afterward?" asked Teta.

"The Secretary took charge. He found a towel in the Pullman, put it around his fat waist, and began to give orders. He sent one of the workmen who had tough feet back to Peon. Then he found sacks and cloth for the women to cover themselves with. He got the train crew and went to the derailed locomotive. He put it back on the track with their help and that of the crew of the freight train. This he had accomplished by the time the commandant and soldiers arrived from Peon. The commandant said he had sent to La Pitaya for more help, but the Secretary did not wait. He assigned the soldiers from Peon to act as guards, and started for Esperanza as fast as the train would run. When he got there, he sent for the General. There has been great activity and commotion in the Army posts ever since."

"What is planned?" asked Teta.

"The Secretary ordered another thousand troops to the Yaqui Zone. All the garrisons are to be increased, and several new ones established in the mountains."

"In the mountains?" asked Teta with concern.

"Yes, that is what we came to tell you. A garrison will be here at Buatachive within a day or two."

"Where else?"

"At Aguajito to the east, and at Guepare, Guajari, and Bronces to the west. The Secretary does not want any more trains held up."

"We must move from here," said Teta.

"Yes, at once."

"Where to?" asked Teta.

"To the northern part of the mountains. It is better there."

"Is that where Chepa is?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the location of her camp?"

"She moves often, but one of her men was in Torim yesterday. He told me where she is now."

"I would like to see her," said Teta.

"I thought you would."

"How can we find the place?" asked Teta.

"I will guide you," said Avalardo.

"Will you not be missed in Torim?"

"Not for a few days, we are supposed to be in Guaymas," said Avalardo.

"The Mexicans will not miss anyone. They are too busy running over each other," said Lupe.

"There is another matter of importance," said Avalardo. "The Secretary had been to Hermosillo to see the Governor of Sonora about arranging a peace with the mountain Yaquis."

"Another reason for his being so outraged over losing his pants," said Lupe.

"The train holdup will end that," said Teta.

"No. It will only postpone it," said Avalardo.

"But why the increase of troops if the Government wishes to make peace?"

"It is only to make a show. The Government well knows that an offer of peace now would be considered a sign of weakness. The Army will make it impossible for us to hold up trains for a while, and then we may expect the peace offer."

"Do you think we should leave here today?" asked Teta.

"Yes. The troops may come tomorrow."

"What is the best route?" asked Teta.

"We can go up this valley to Culahuihui today. Tomorrow we can reach the spring called Higuera, which is south of the Hill of Chunamove. The next day we can go to a waterhole called Sibapobampo, east of the Fort of Tetacombiate. There is a long, broad valley between the Forts of Tetacombiate and Bacatete. It will be necessary for us to cross that valley at night in order to get to the Pass of Bacatetito. The next day we should be in Chepa's camp."

"It is well. Let us go to the shelter and eat."

As they went up the trail, Teta asked, "Has the General given any more woodcutting concessions?"

"Not that we know about. It will be some time before another contractor will want to cut our wood," answered Avalardo.

"Seven Yaqui rifles were a stronger argument than any letter to the President," said Lupe.

The evening shadows had deepened, and a purple haze filled the vistas in the pass between the springs of Bacatetito and Mazocoba. The terrific heat of the day had spent itself, but the rock slopes of the valley still reflected the heat which had been stored within them.

"How much farther is it to Chepa's camp?" asked Teta.

"Two hours, perhaps," said Avalardo.

Teta felt increasing excitement as they neared the camp of the woman he had seen in the firelight many weeks before. A mental picture of her surged up vividly—a woman who was two women, eyes which glowed soft and eager one moment and became as hard as obsidian the next;

features which radiated warmth and tenderness one instant and fixed with deadly intent the next; a body which gave promise of being excitingly inviting and responsive one second and was cold and unapproachable the next. Such a woman he had never before seen or known, and she had scarcely been out of his thoughts since he first saw her at Avalardo's house. One brief meeting had brought into focus all his latent, smoldering intentions. Nebulous thought had crystallized into purposeful action. The driving impulsion which she had set off within him had found release in the death of the woodcutters and the train holdup. This woman had power, a silent, radiating power. What she had done to him she had done to other men according to their abilities. That was why she had a band of followers. It was the reason that at twenty-five she was a legend, a symbol of freedom and resistance to the Yaquis, and one of fear to the Mexicans. He did not know many of the details of her life, but her power and her leadership were apparent.

As the distance between his band and Chepa's camp decreased, his anticipation increased, and he quickened his steps. Repeatedly he forced himself to slow his pace, remembering the travel-weary women and children in his band.

Avalardo turned from the valley they had been traveling into a side canyon which came from the right. The ascent along the canyon floor became steeper and the climbing, with each person carrying a heavy load, caused the band to slacken its speed. After a time, Avalardo turned left into a secondary canyon, and the ascent became even steeper. There was no soil, no vegetation, only the solid brown rock of the walls and broken rocks at the bottom. Progress was up and up, from rock to rock, along

the course of the canyon. The sun had set, and deep twilight was coming swiftly in the narrowness of the gorge.

"We are almost there. Chepa's sentry has probably seen us," said Avalardo.

"Do you think she is expecting us?" asked Teta.

"She will not be surprised. I told her man in Torim about the increase in Mexican troops and the new garrisons. She knows this will cause a reshifting of the mountain bands. Also, she knows more about you and what you have done than you may think."

The steep trail turned to the right. When Teta and Avalardo went around the curve, they came face to face with a Yaqui soldier, a man in his forties, with battered straw hat, a ragged, torn, faded shirt, multipatched cotton trousers, and old, cracked *huaraches*. His Remington rifle was well polished, and his two cartridge belts were filled.

"Who passes?" said the sentry in a low voice.

"Avalardo, who are you?"

"I am Sosa. We were together at the battle of Mazocoba."

"I well remember, and I would have recognized you had it not been so dark. This is Teta."

"We know about you," said Sosa.

"Is Chepa at the camp?" asked Avalardo.

"Yes."

"Is it far?"

"It is near. Five minutes."

The trail continued steep for a short distance and turned again slightly to the right where the narrow canyon abruptly entered a rocky cove without vegetation. On the south was a towering, dark, overhanging cliff. To the north lay the shadowy outlines of irregular, broken ridges. The bottom of the open space, perhaps an acre, was level

rock, covered in places with rock dust. Near the base of the imposing cliff was a fire, around which several women were preparing food. The yellow firelight illumined a small area, and the dark shapes of men and children could be seen moving in its receding glow.

As he approached the fire, Teta felt the muscles of his throat constrict. His eyes searched the perimeter of the firelight, but she was not to be seen.

A man came out of the shadows and said, "Welcome, Avalardo."

"Trinidad!" said Avalardo.

"It is many years since I saw you."

He was dressed like Sosa, but was an older man, in his early fifties.

"This is Teta, and coming up the trail are the members of his band."

Trinidad's look went from Teta's head to his feet and back again.

"We have heard of you," he said.

"Where is Chepa?" asked Avalardo. Teta was grateful for the question.

"She will be here soon. She has gone to see how it is with the sentry on the trail from the east."

The members of Teta's band had now come up and were placing their baskets and bundles on the ground. The women and children sat flat on the ground, resting. The men exchanged casual greetings with the men of Chepa's band. Most of them knew one another. Teta stood, apparently listening to talk between Avalardo and Trinidad, but he was not aware of what they were saying.

Then he knew she was coming. He could not see her nor hear her, yet he knew. He turned his eyes in the direction he felt her approaching. In a moment there was a blur,

which became a shadowy substance, an outline, then a woman, coming from the darkness into the firelight. Teta thought, "She is coming back into my life just as she went from it." As she neared, with her graceful, gliding walk, her face was radiant and animated.

"Avalardo!" she said, extending her hand. "How good it is for you to come."

Then she saw Lupe. "You, too, Lupe."

"I was not letting Avalardo come by himself," said Lupe, in her loud deep voice.

Teta had not taken his eyes from Chepa's face. If she had seen him, she had given no indication. She went on chatting gaily with Avalardo and Lupe for several seconds. Then she turned slowly toward Teta. As she did so, her manner changed. Her radiance gave way to dignity and solemnity. The tilt of her head made her appear majestic in the firelight. Her eyes, warm and probing, looked at him for what seemed an interminable period. She seemed to be checking her memory's picture of him.

She said in a low, husky voice, "Do you remember me this time?"

"I could not forget you, even though I would be shot for not doing so," his voice came thickly.

"We have heard about the woodcutters and the train. Both were done with skill and precision."

"They do not compare with what I have heard of your achievements."

"You must tell me how you managed the train."

"It is not worthy of the telling. The odds were heavily in our favor."

Her eyes went to the scar on his temple. "You underestimate yourself. Later I want to hear about it."

Turning to all of Teta's band she said, "You are hungry



as well as tired. We have food. Tonight we can feed you. We returned from a raid yesterday."

Teta said, "We have corn, frijoles, coffee, and sugar from the train."

"But they are not cooked. Tonight you eat with us. We have enough."

"We will give you provisions tomorrow," said Teta.

"We would hardly know what to do with coffee and sugar," said Chepa.

"We would like to camp with you for a day or two until we can find a site," said Teta.

"You are welcome to stay as long as you wish. We have plenty of room, such as it is. The cliff provides us a shade during the day and shelter from rain if the storm comes from the south. If it comes from the north, we have no protection. Tonight the sky is clear, and we have nothing to worry about. Now let us eat," she said, leading the way to the simmering food pots.

Several times during the evening Teta and Chepa's glances met, only to shift again. Each seemed to be trying to comprehend and evaluate the other's state of mind. Teta waited for a chance to talk with her alone, but she skillfully evaded him.

"There is room for your people to sleep over there," she said, pointing to the base of the cliff near the east entrance. Then she disappeared, and he saw her no more that night.

## CHAPTER 8

TETA lay awake long after the coals of the fire had ceased to glow and all was still and silent in the camp. The sentries, he knew, were at their posts, and only he and they were awake. It was long past midnight when he slept.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight. The camp was astir, and a slight breeze brought the acrid smell of smoke and the aroma of boiling coffee. He folded his blanket and went to the campfire. Avalardo and Trinidad were sitting on their heels drinking coffee, and Lupe was patting *torillas*. A dozen men of Teta's band were eating or standing near the fire, while their women were busy with the food.

Teta said, "Good morning."

Several men responded to his greeting.

"You slept very well," said Trinidad.

"I must be very lazy," said Teta.

"Here is some coffee," said Lupe.

Teta's eyes went from person to person until he had



surveyed the entire group, but Chepa was not to be seen. Avalardo seemed aware of Teta's thoughts.

"Chepa must be lazy also," he said.

Without looking up, Trinidad said, "She left before day-break with eight of the men."

"Does she usually leave that early?" asked Avalardo.

"She has no set plan. She may go or come at any time of the day or night," said Trinidad.

In the meantime Teta became aware that the men of Chepa's band were sizing him up. They were not openly looking at him, and occasionally they made casual comments, one to another, on indifferent topics, but he knew they were evaluating and comparing. The women were also interested and curious. He was conscious of swift, searching glances.

The sun, when it rose, was far enough to the north that its rays struck the red-orange face of the cliff which became a resplendent, towering backdrop to a stage which was the floor of the cove. Extending northward were jagged, gray-black, basaltic spires of volcanic rock.

"A more splendid campsite I have never seen," said Teta.

"Yes, it was the same thirty years ago," said Avalardo.

"You camped here then?" asked Trinidad.

"Many times."

"It is our favorite place, but it has some faults. There is no firewood," said Trinidad.

"Where do you get wood?" asked Teta.

"We carry it from the Pass of Bacatete to the east, and from the Pass of Mazocoba to the west."

"Is it far?"

"From three to five miles."

"What about water?" asked Teta.

"There are several *tinajas*, or natural cisterns, up there," said Trinidad, pointing north to the rough country.

"How long will they last?"

"Several months. Some years, when the rains fall right, it is possible to stay here the year round."

"Is this site known to the Mexican Army?" asked Teta.

"Yes. It is known."

"Has the Army never raided it?"

"Yes, many times, but no Yaquis have ever been trapped here," said Trinidad.

"The only way the Army could keep us from using this place," said Avalardo, "would be to take possession of it some time when we are away, and then occupy it permanently. The side that holds it has the advantage over the aggressor."

"If you were going to try to take this place, how would you do it?" asked Teta.

"I would not try," said Avalardo, "unless it was most necessary and I had many men and guns. There are only two approaches, the one we used and the one from the east. That from the east is much easier to defend than the trail we came last night. The eastern trail goes between two high cliffs. The passage is very narrow, and a few men on this side could keep back a whole army from below."

"But suppose the Mexicans should attack in force from both directions at a time when most of the men with rifles were away?" said Teta.

"In that case," said Trinidad, "the sentries would know the Mexicans were coming some time before they could get here. We would disappear into the *malpais* to the

north. There are thousands of cracks and crevices there where one, two, or ten people can hide. Our people know these places."

"If a force is coming from one direction and the Yaquis do not think they have enough men to fight off the attack, they go out the other entrance," said Avalardo.

"It is truly a rare place," said Teta. "How much time do you spend here?"

"Four or five months a year, depending on the water in the *tinajas*, the size and location of the Mexican garrisons, the season of the year, and other factors."

"The season of the year?" asked Teta.

"In the late summer and fall we move to the Valley of Agua Caliente or the Valley of Guaymas when the fruit of the *pitaya* and the mesquite beans are ripening. That is when the Yaquis get fat," said Trinidad.

"Now we should see about getting a supply of wood," said Teta.

He called the men of his band together. "We will be here several days and will need firewood. Nacho, will you take five men and go down the trail to the east until you find wood? Primero, you take the rest of our men and go back the way we came last night. Everyone will bring as much as he can carry."

When they had left, Teta said, "I would like to see the *tinajas*."

"I will show you," said Avalardo.

He led the way across the level area to a trail which wound up the sharp, rugged terrain to the north until they came to a craterlike hole in the solid rock. The hole was like a shallow, inverted cone which had been tilted so that one side was perpendicular and the other side slanted sufficiently for a person to walk down to the bottom. The

area encompassed by the rim of the crater was considerable, and rain water collected in the bottom. The perpendicular side of the crater was to the south, and the sun seldom shone on the water, which reduced evaporation.

"This is the main water supply for the camp," said Avalardo. "There are others farther back and much harder to reach. They are used only when the water here is gone."

"Do you know where Chepa went today?" asked Teta.

"No. Chepa says little about her plans. I doubt she told anyone where she was going, unless it was Trinidad."

"Is Trinidad her *segundo*?"

"Yes. When Lupe and I went back to Torim, she lived with Trinidad and his wife. Trinidad became the first member of her band."

When Teta and Avalardo got back to the camp, Avalardo found pleasure in reminiscing with Trinidad, but Teta was restless. He walked about the camp, then decided to go back down the trail west to the sentry's lookout. Sosa was not there; a younger man of about Teta's age was on duty.

"How are you called?" asked Teta.

"Antonio."

"Has there been any activity on the trail today?"

"Only the men going after wood."

"Did Chepa go this way?"

"Not since I have been here."

"How long have you been here?"

"Since sunrise."

"How far can you see down the trail?"

"At one place a section of the trail is visible two miles away."

"Is that what you are supposed to watch?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been with Chepa?"

"Five years."

"Before that did you live in the villages or in the mountains?"

"Always in the mountains."

"Do you know General Caumea?"

"The Yaqui General?"

"Yes," said Teta.

"I know him."

"Is he a good man?"

"Yes, very intelligent, very brave."

"Do the mountain Yaquis respect him?"

"Very much."

"Does he ever come here?"

"Yes. He comes to confer with Chepa."

"What do they confer about?"

"He asks her advice. He has regard for her wisdom."

"Where is the General now?"

"Somewhere near Mazocoba."

Teta had scarcely taken his eyes off the section of the trail two miles below. "Thank you, Antonio. I will go back now and have a look at the trail which goes east."

The trail east began with a steep decline into a narrow canyon. The high walls converged until the opening was so small a horse could scarcely pass. Teta went on to where the canyon became wider. From the lay of the canyon he knew the sentry post should be near at hand. He searched for it several minutes.

Then a voice came from high up on the south cliff, "Hello."

Teta looked but still saw nothing.

"Where are you?" he called.

"Here."

"How do you get up there?"

"I will come down and show you the trail."

When the sentry came down, Teta could not remember having seen him the night before. He was slightly younger than Teta.

"How are you called?" Teta asked.

"Jorge."

"Have you known Chepa long?"

"Yes, always. She is my cousin."

"How long have you been with her here in the mountains?"

"Ten years. I was the second one to join her band. Trinidad was the first."

"You must have been very young."

"I had fourteen years."

"You appear to be about the same age as Chepa."

"A year younger."

"Did you live in the villages before you joined Chepa?"

"No, at Ures. I was sold to an *hacendado* there."

"Did you run away?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I had heard about Chepa and what she was doing. My mother was hanged at Hermosillo, and my father was deported. I had not forgotten."

"You were in the group from Rancho Pimas?"

"Yes."

"You were one of the smaller boys."

"Yes, and I remember you from Rancho Prieta."

"Then we witnessed the same massacre."

"You, and I, and Chepa. Do you know the vow Chepa took that day?"

"Only that she would take revenge on the Mexican Army."

"It was more than that. She vowed to kill as many Mexican soldiers as took part in the hanging."

"How many were there?"

"About two hundred."

"I never knew the number. How has she done up to now?"

"She has killed a hundred and seventy-eight."

"One would never think it possible."

"She does not talk about it. I doubt she has ever told anyone, but I know."

"How do you know?"

"By the number of dots on the stock of her rifle."

"You have counted them?"

"Yes."

"How has she managed to kill so many?"

"Some in battles, but mostly by sharpshooting at small details of troops or at couriers going from one fort to another."

"Does she kill when she raids the ranches?"

"If she meets with soldiers, she does, but otherwise she kills only when necessary."

"You think she is a great leader, do you not, Jorge?"

"She is the greatest!" said Jorge, looking straight at Teta.

"And the rest of her band, what do they think?"

"The same."

"I agree with you."

Jorge's hard stare relented.

"You have done well yourself," he said.

"How would you know?"

"Chepa told me."

"Does Chepa think I am good?"

"Chepa thinks every mountain Yaqui is good," said Jorge, evasively.

Teta tried another approach.

"Can you tell me, Jorge, why Chepa has never married? Almost all Yaqui girls marry before sixteen."

Jorge looked down the trail, seeming to ignore the question. Finally he said, "That is hard to answer."

"She must have had opportunities," said Teta.

"Many men in the mountains and elsewhere would give much to marry her," said Jorge.

"No one has."

"I suppose it is because of her vow. To fulfill it, she must have a band of fighting men. She thinks that if she were to give herself to one, she would lose the others."

For some minutes Teta seemed to forget Jorge.

At last he said, "How far can you see the trail?"

"For two miles and a half, to where the canyon enters the valley which extends from the Pass of San José to Bacatete. We not only see who turns up this trail, but who passes back and forth from the Fort of Bacatete to the northern Forts of Pitayita, Arenas, and Punta de Agua."

"There is a party turning up our trail now," said Teta.

"They are the men who went after wood," said Jorge.

"Did Chepa go down the trail this morning?"

"I do not know. I was not awake when she left."

"I will go back now; some time I want to hear how it was when you were on the *hacienda*."

"It was bad; I do not like to think about it."

"Adiós, Jorge."

"Go with God."

Back in the camp Avalardo and Trinidad were still talking. Lupe and the other women were grinding corn on



*metates*. Teta listened to Avalardo and Trinidad for a while, then walked over to where Lupe was working.

She gave him a quizzical look and said, "You are very restless. You cannot take a train every day."

"It would be a fine thing if one could."

"There are other things to be taken," said Lupe.

The other women glanced up quickly at her and then at Teta. The grinding of the *manos* against the *metates* slowed down.

"It is easy to take a train," said Teta.

"Other things would not be difficult if a man would remember that he is a man," said Lupe.

The *manos* stopped.

"It is easy for women to give advice," said Teta.

"Which men are too stupid to take," said Lupe.

"A woman's head is filled with crazy ideas."

"Only an imbecile thinks so!" roared Lupe.

The *manos* began grinding busily once more.

The scar on Teta's temple lifted, and a smile of affection was visible as he looked at Lupe.

"You were quite a woman in your day."

Lupe was obviously pleased.

"If you are so restless, go and get two cans of water," she said.

The women marveled at this woman who could tell a man to go for water—a man who had taken a train!

Teta, still smiling, took the two five-gallon cans with the carrying yoke and started toward the *tinaja*.

The women gave Lupe appreciative glances as Teta climbed the trail.

When Teta returned, he placed the water cans in the shade of the cliff and went back to Lupe.

"Use your muscles when your mind is unsettled," she said.

"Lupe, if you had been a man, the course of the Yaqui wars might have been different."

"If I had been a man, I, too, would have stammered and hesitated when a strong arm was needed with a woman."

"Lupe, you are like a mother to me, but sometimes I find you without understanding."

"That is where you are stupid. I understand too well."

"One cannot win an argument with you," said Teta.

"If you knew what you were talking about, you might."

The women were listening intently, and the *manos* were silent. This was something they must remember. The one next to Lupe was young, perhaps eighteen. She was beautiful and in the full, rounded bloom of late pregnancy.

Teta turned to her, "Whose woman are you?"

"Jorge's."

"Jorge has knowledge of women. I talked with him to-day. We are in agreement on many matters."

She gave Teta an appreciative glance.

Nacho and his party arrived through the east entrance. They came to where the women were and put their loads on the woodpile.

"Did you see any movement along the road?" asked Teta.

"Only a wood party from another band," said Nacho.

"Where was the party from?"

"The Mesa of Chichibobuaje, or the Place of the Bitter Weeds; they are of the band of Jesús Matus."

"Do you know Jesús Matus?"

"Yes. He has a great hate for the Mexicans."



"For the Army, or for all Mexicans?"

"All. He kills every one he can find, men, women, and children."

"Does he have special cause?"

"All Yaquis have cause. He has more than most."

"There is food," said Lupe.

"We are ready for it," said Nacho.

In a short time Primero's party returned. The addition to the woodpile was considerable.

"Did you see anyone today?" asked Teta.

"A company of Mexican cavalry passed, going from Bacatetito toward the Entrada a los Pilares."

"Probably going from the Fort of Bacatete to Ortiz or Misa."

"The men had their equipment, and were no doubt changing posts."

"There were too many to attack?"

"I thought so, although Rafael wanted to."

"How many troops were there?"

"A hundred."

"Your judgment was wise."

The sun sank lower and finally touched the rim of the Mesa of Mazocoba. The firelight was beginning to color the red-orange of the cliff when Chepa's party came up the west entrance. When the men reached the circle of light, each was loaded with meat.

"Burro?" asked Trinidad.

"Horse," said Sosa, who was a member of the party.

"That is much better," said Trinidad. "How did you find a horse?"

"A courier from Tetacombiate to Bacatete was good enough to give him to us," said Chepa.

Chepa sat flat on the ground near the fire, with her

skirts spread about her and a gray *rebozo* falling over her shoulders. Lupe brought her a bowl of stew, which she ate with healthy relish. Teta scarcely took his eyes from her. She looked at him once and said, "Have you had a good day?"

"A very long and uneventful one," he replied.

She gave him another swift glance and remained silent. Her face was impassive, that of Chepa the Leader.

When she finished her stew, she took a rag and a string from a leather pouch attached to one of her cartridge belts and began to clean her rifle. She undid the breech piece, stood the rifle on its butt, and lowered one end of the string, with a bit of lead on it, through the barrel. She attached a small rag to the other end of the string and pulled it through. Then she looked through the opening, pointing the gun toward the fire. She was not satisfied and repeated the operation.

When she had finished the cleaning, she took a sharp pointed piece of obsidian from her pouch and bored a dot-like hole in the stock.

Teta had watched every move she made. "A hundred and seventy-nine," he thought.

He was so preoccupied he was not aware that all the women, including Lupe, were watching him and Chepa. The women, who are more sensitive and wiser than men in such matters, perceived that something lay between the two. A silent, surging tension grew with the evening, until the very atmosphere seemed charged. Even the men became vaguely aware that a smoldering, unspoken clash of wills was forming.

Lupe caught Avalardo's eye, rose, and walked away. Primero's wife noticed and did the same, followed by Primero. Jorge's wife gave him a slight nudge, and they

left. In a little while Teta and Chepa were left alone, Teta still watching her, Chepa looking at the fire.

"Chepa," he said, "I have been very unhappy today."

"Why?" she asked without looking up.

"You have been avoiding me ever since I arrived."

"I am sorry, Teta."

"I feel unwelcome. Tomorrow I will take my band to another camping place."

She looked at him quickly. The warm glow came into her eyes, her features softened, and the elusive dimple played on her cheek.

In a low voice she said, "Teta, please do not go. We have meat and you have corn, and there is no other campsite so beautiful as this. If you left, the days would be long and uneventful for others."

The sincerity of her words was augmented by the light in her eyes, the tone of her voice, and the expression of her face.

He regarded her for several seconds and said, "If you were to ask me in that manner to jump off the cliff over there, I would do it."

A trace of amusement came into her eyes. "Be careful of hasty promises."

"You have been in my mind ever since I saw you at Avalardo's."

"Do not talk so tonight, Teta. It is not wise. There are many things you do not understand."

The tenderness of her mood was replaced by one of resolution. She rose, slung her rifle over her shoulder, and walked into the darkness. Teta felt it would be useless to follow.

## CHAPTER 9

TETA sat by the fire until it turned to ashes, then took his rifle and went along the trail to the west. When he reached the place of the sentry, he found Trinidad.

"Good evening, Teta. You should be asleep."

"I cannot sleep," said Teta.

"That is the condition of an old man," said Trinidad.

"Or a foolish one," added Teta.

"Perhaps you are planning to take another train?"

"It is not possible now. The Mexicans are alerted and have taken extra precautions."

"There should be some unguarded spot," said Trinidad.

"I do not underestimate the Mexicans," said Teta.

"You are wise, my son," said Trinidad.

"What would prevent an attacking force from getting this far up the trail at night without being discovered?" asked Teta.

"We have another sentry below, near the road from Bacatetito to Los Pílares. If a suspicious party turns up our trail, he signals to the sentry here."

"Do you keep a second sentry on the other trail, too?"

"Yes, he is stationed at the place where that trail leaves the road from the Pass of San José to Bacatete."

"Then there are four sentries on guard each night."

"Yes. It is necessary."

"Tomorrow night our men will take over one of the trails," said Teta.

"It is well," said Trinidad. "If you still cannot sleep, I would like to hear more about the train."

Teta gave him a detailed account.

"It was remarkable!" said Trinidad. "I would have liked most seeing the high official from Mexico City with the towel around his waist, trying to get the locomotive back on the track."

"We did not get to see that," said Teta. "We only heard about it later."

"The holdup was well planned and executed," said Trinidad.

"God willed it," said Teta. "I have no inclination to sleep tonight. Why do you not go back to camp?"

"If you insist on staying awake, I will go. I do not have anything on my mind."

"What signal would the sentry below give if there were danger?"

"A gunshot. If a shot is fired, come quickly to the camp and give the alarm."

"Good night," said Trinidad.

"Go with God," said Teta.

The next day was one of strain. Everyone except the sentries stayed in camp. Early in the morning Teta said to Chepa, "With your permission, my men will take over the sentry duty on the trail to the west."

"It is well," she said, and walked away.

All day she remained withdrawn and unapproachable. Teta, with eyes red from loss of sleep, was unquiet and grim. The members of both bands moved about with little to say. As the day wore on, they huddled in their respective groups. There was little communication or banter between the men. Avalardo remained apart, and Lupe went about the cooking chores with the air of one who has knowledge others do not have. Trinidad was affable and friendly. Everyone else was affected by the tension. Even the children felt it and made less noise than usual.

When evening came, a supper of horse meat, frijoles, *tortillas*, prepared under the direction of Lupe, filled the stomachs of the people but did not relieve the strain occasioned by the moods of the leaders of the two bands. The light of an opulent full moon, rising over the Mesa of Chichibobuaje, struck the top of the cliff.

Chepa, still withdrawn and remote, was consumed with the struggle deep within her. Her mind, will, past, vow, future, impulses, her dormant passions and womanhood, all were at war, each with the other. But her inscrutable face gave no hint of her inner tumult.

Teta, puzzled and determined, controlled his emotions and his passion. He sat brooding and looking into the fire, occasionally glancing at Chepa, and waiting.

Lupe was busy mending the fire, washing the bowls, arranging the cooking pots, and creating quite a commotion.

At length Chepa rose, swung her rifle over her shoulder, and without a word to anyone started toward the east entrance. Teta watched her go. "She walks with the grace of a doe, yet would be harder to capture than a mountain lioness," he thought.

Lupe, with increased industry, continued her pottering

and muttering. "A mouse could get away from a cat, if the cat were blind," Teta heard her say.

He looked at Lupe, who gave him a quick glance, her eyes shifted toward the east trail. He got up and walked away in the direction Chepa had gone.

The men of Chepa's band stirred with common concern. Jorge got to his feet, grasping his rifle.

Lupe, no longer muttering, said lustily, "*Santa María*, are all men helpless? Someone put some wood on the fire."

"Why do we have women, if they let the fire go out?" said Trinidad, as he placed wood on the coals.

He looked at Avalardo and said, "We have nothing to worry about tonight except the Mexicans."

Jorge's wife caught him by the wrist and gently pulled him down. The tension eased, and Lupe began telling a flavorful story of an episode which had happened at this same place before most of the men present were born.

When Teta reached the narrow passage in the trail, Chepa was not to be seen. He reasoned that she had either gone down to the lower sentry or up to the sentry on top of the cliff. He decided on the upper trail. It was a steep and circuitous path. He climbed until he reached a shelf where the trail forked. The right fork, he knew, went to the sentry's lookout. "She may have gone either way," he thought. "I will wait here until she returns."

After an interval he heard her coming from the sentry's lookout above.

"Chepa," he called before she saw him.

She stopped short a moment, then came slowly toward him.

"I must talk with you. We cannot put it off any longer."

She regarded him intently, shifting her gaze from his

eyes to the scar on his temple. Her expression softened.

"You make it hard for me," she said.

"We must face this thing between us. We cannot go on as it has been today."

After a moment of indecision she said, "Very well, we will talk."

He was still blocking the trail.

"Where?" he asked.

"Come, we will go to a place I know," she said, turning to the left and leading the way up the rough, dim trail.

On top of the mesa she stopped and faced him. He went up to her and caught her shoulders with a strong grip. She stiffened her arms against his chest and stood resistant and rigid, her head back and her eyes returning his penetrating gaze. Moments passed as he increased the pressure of his hands.

"Teta, this cannot be. There is no place in my life for a man, any man."

He did not reply, for he was watching her struggle with desire and a disciplined will. Slowly he began to draw her to him, the strength of his arms overcame that of hers. Still she held her head back. Her eyes shifted from his eyes to the scar on his temple. Suddenly her resistance ceased, and he felt the pressure of slender, powerful thighs against his.

The moonlight shadows had deepened, and Chepa's fingers were exploring the lines of Teta's face. They came to the scar and lingered there.

"I fully realize now I am a woman, and you are the leader," she said.

"You are my woman."

"Do you always subjugate your women, Teta?"

"Never one like you."



He looked at her. Her eyes were eager and her face was responsive.

The moon was touching the rim of the Mesa of Mazocoba to the west and the stars had faded in the east when Chepa awoke. She raised on her elbow and looked at Teta. Gently she stroked his hair. He opened his eyes and smiled at her.

"How are you, *insewa*?"

"Why do you call me 'little flower'?" she asked.

"You are like a cactus blossom in the desert, a bloom which surrounds itself with a hundred spines to keep away all intruders."

"Teta, do you want to marry me?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Yes," he replied quickly.

"Have you thought of what it will mean?"

"I have thought only of you, that I must have you."

"From this day you must be the leader of both bands."

"Is that necessary? Your men worship you. They will resent me."

"There is no other way for me to be your woman."

"Recently I talked with Jorge. He thinks you are the greatest leader who lives, and he feels strongly about it. He relented toward me only when he learned that I agree with him."

"Yes, Jorge would be like that," she said, "but I will talk with him. My men admire and respect you, and I believe they will agree to uniting our bands with you as the leader. If there are those who object and will not accept you, they must go."

"Very well, *insewa*."

"And, Teta, let us have a Yaqui marriage ceremony today, this morning."

"But we have no *maestro*."

"We have one. Trinidad was once Third *Maestro* at Cocorit."

"You think of everything," he said.

"Teta, there is one other thing," she looked at him steadily. "I want you to help me keep my vow."

He assented solemnly.

"Now," she said, "we must go down and tell our people."

But she was in no hurry. She combed and braided her thick black hair, shook and adjusted her faded blue cotton skirt and blouse, put on her *huaraches*, placed her gray *rebozo* over her head, letting the ends fall forward over her firm, pointed breasts, then slung on her cartridge belts. When she had finished, she picked up her rifle.

"One moment, Chepa," Teta said, as she started down the trail.

She stopped and looked back at him.

"We must come back here tonight," he said.

"Tonight, and many nights," she promised.

## CHAPTER 10

THE sun was shining on the face of the high cliff. The morning meal was over, and everyone was waiting. Lupe tried to make things appear normal. Avalardo and Trinidad sat where they could see the east entrance; occasionally they exchanged a comment. Jorge, a dark scowl on his face, moved about, casting frequent glances toward the east.

Someone said, "They are coming."

Yaqui etiquette was forgotten, and everyone turned to look, if not to stare. Chepa and Teta approached with bouyant steps. They were not holding hands, because Yaqui men and women do not hold hands in public. Neither was she walking behind him as is the Yaqui custom. Instead, she was walking at his side.

The strain of the day before was gone from Teta's face. Chepa was radiant, her smile irresistible. As they came forward, the power of her personality lightened everyone's mood. Even the scowl on Jorge's face softened.

Chepa went to Lupe, took her hands, and spun her about.

"Is it not a beautiful day, Lupe?" Chepa made a wide, sweeping, graceful gesture that included the sky, the cliff, the mountains, and everyone present.

"Why is it so?" asked Lupe.

"Because Teta and I are going to be married."

"In my opinion you two are already married!" said Lupe.

"But we are going to have a ceremony, a Yaqui ceremony," said Chepa.

"When?" asked Lupe.

"Now, here, in front of the cross. Trinidad, will you come and say it for us?"

"Wait a moment," said Teta, "a bride should have a wedding dress."

He went to the base of the cliff where he kept his few belongings, unrolled the Pullman blanket, and took out the dress, the shoes, the earrings, and the ring. Carrying them to Chepa, he said, "Here are some things we got at the train."

Chepa held the dress up; Lupe and all the other women crowded in to admire it.

"Put it on," said Lupe.

Chepa looked toward the trail leading to the *tinaja*.

"No, not there," said Lupe, "over here, we will dress you." She motioned for Chepa and the women to move over by the cliff.

Lupe and the women formed a semicircle around Chepa. The change was made from faded cotton skirt and blouse into a dress of sea-green silk that swept the ground. The shiny toes of black leather shoes, which replaced her cracked *huaraches*, showed beneath the full, rustling skirt.

Lupe produced bright silk ribbons and braided them into Chepa's lustrous hair. Chepa removed the simple wire earrings she had worn since childhood and inserted the heavy gold ones with green stones.

"I give you these and you may give them to your daughter," she said, placing the simple earrings in the hand of Jorge's wife.

Slowly she drew onto her finger the ring of gold, set with a green stone, and stood motionless looking at it.

"I have always wanted a ring," she said in a voice scarcely audible but tinged with emotion.

Teta had just been presented with a pair of Yaqui *huaraches*, which Trinidad had brought out. Nacho had tied a green silk handkerchief he had gotten from the train around Teta's neck. Now, with the wide American felt hat, the purple shirt, his worn blue denim trousers, and the new finery, he had achieved the appearance of a Yaqui leader.

Teta removed his hat as he and Chepa knelt before the cross. Trinidad came and stood before them. The men gathered close, removing their hats. Trinidad had forgotten some of the marriage ceremony, but he put in the parts he could remember, gave the usual admonitions, and said a prayer in Latin.

Teta and Chepa stood up and the older men started forward to shake hands and congratulate them, but Chepa raised her hand for silence.

"I am now Teta's woman. In the future we will not have two bands but one band, and Teta will be the leader. I want to ask you who have been faithful and loyal to me to accept Teta as your leader."

The announcement was unexpected.

Trinidad was the first to speak. "This is as it should be.

Chepa is a woman, and she should be married. With a leader like Teta, both she and we will be happy. What do you say, Avalardo?"

Trinidad knew that Avalardo's opinion would carry much weight. He was one of the great men of the Yaqui nation, including the eight river villages, the mountains, Hermosillo, and the villages in Arizona.

Avalardo was deeply moved. His voice was low, but so intense was the silence that what he said was heard by everyone.

"This is a happy day for me. Chepa, my adopted daughter, and Teta, my godson, are our two greatest leaders. Both have rendered service to their people as no others have. It was the Wise God who brought them together, and only good can come of it. We will all be benefited. I give them my blessing and wish them much happiness."

The look of approval on the faces of the men indicated that the consolidation was acceptable.

Trinidad said, "Today we make fiesta. We do not have any mescal and we do not have a *ramada*, we do not have musical instruments or dancing costumes, but we do have coffee and food and two *pascola* dancers. They can dance without music and masks and make their jokes and stories."

The handshaking began and Chepa, standing beside Teta, poured forth the full force of her vibrant personality. Those who were not smiling when they came up were doing so when they left, all but Jorge, who did not come.

Lupe came by, giving admonitions in her gusty manner. Teta gave her hand a special squeeze and said, "You and your blind cat!"

When the congratulations were over, Chepa sought

Jorge out. She took him by the arm and led him across the level area where she stood talking with him long and earnestly.

Avalardo and Trinidad watched them. "Have no fear," said Trinidad, "there is no one who can stand against her."

After a while, when they came back, Jorge went to Teta and extended his hand. "I congratulate you, Teta. You are the luckiest of men."

The moon had risen again, and the *pascolas*, with their shirts off and trousers rolled up to the knee, but without masks, cocoon anklets, or rattles, were still entertaining the crowd with ribald jokes when Teta and Chepa slipped away to the top of the mesa. This time they carried all their effects with them.

"Here is my other present," said Teta, unfolding the Pullman blanket.

"It will be warm in the winter," she said, feeling its thickness.

Chepa stepped out of her *huaraches*, which she had put on for the steep climb up the mesa, and stood on the blankets while she removed the dress. She held it out and inspected it in the moonlight, the front, the back, and each of the sides.

"Is it not pretty?" she said.

Teta was not looking at the dress, but at his wife, silhouetted in the soft light.

"The most beautiful object the Good God ever made," he said.

She was too intent to notice his meaning.

"I will keep it to be buried in. If the *madrinas* cannot get it on me, they can put it under my head."



She then stood regarding the ring, turning her hand slowly so that the sheen of the green stone reflected the light. "Teta, this ring makes me very happy."

"I am glad," he answered, pulling her down onto the blankets.

Chepa was affectionate as she stroked his hair, but the intense passion of the night before was missing.

"I am sorry if I am not what you want me to be tonight, *inpale*, my love," she said.

"We can wait."

She sat up. "Teta, were you lonely in Yucatan? Were there not girls with dark smooth skins, inviting smiles, and flashing eyes?"

"Yes, there are such girls everywhere."

"Did you not find them desirable? You were not a child when you left there," said Chepa.

"They were only of passing interest."

"But the girls in Yucatan did make life more bearable?" Her tone was half serious, half teasing.

"Naturally."

"I am glad if they made things easier for you."

After a moment she added, "But now I will be all things to you."

"*Insewa*, you became that the first time I saw you."

She was silent a while as she looked out across the valley and the hills to the southeast.

"Look, Teta, how clearly the mountains are outlined."

He raised up and looked to where she pointed.

"There is the summit of the Hill of the Rooster."

"Why is it called El Cerro de Gallo?" he asked.

"I have heard two stories. One is that it looks a little like a rooster when viewed from across the Valley of Agua Caliente with the head, the trough of the back, and the

tail sticking up higher toward the northwest. The other is that a band of Yaquis were once camped at a *tinaja* on the north side of the Hill, in the Pass of Bacatete, and each morning they heard a bird singing on one of the summits. The song of the bird was like a rooster's crowing, only more musical. So, the place is called the Hill of the Rooster."

"Have you been there?" asked Teta.

"Yes, many times. It is an inspiring peak. From it you can see across the Valley of Agua Caliente and even to the Sierra Madre beyond the Rio Yaqui. To the west you can see to the Gulf, to Guaymas and beyond. I would like to camp at the base of the Rooster, but it is too near the Fort of Bacatete."

"Zamahaca stands out as distinctly as does the Rooster," said Teta.

"That is true, but Zamahaca always brings sad thoughts. While you were in Yucatan, a tragic thing occurred on the west slope of Zamahaca. Several mountain bands collected at a *tinaja* there to organize a campaign against the Mexicans. The men, over a hundred of them with rifles, went away to fight. While they were gone, some *yoricoyotes* discovered the camp of women, children, and old men. They went to the Fort of Tetacombiate and led back a company of Mexican troops, who surrounded and surprised the camp. The old men were hanged, the women were taken by the soldiers, and the children were carried to Guaymas, where they were sold to Mexicans. I often think of that outrage when a Mexican soldier or a *yoricoyote* passes in front of the sights of my rifle."

A hardness had come into Chepa's voice, and her muscles had tensed. Teta noticed it and soothed her. She relaxed, and her voice regained its musical quality.

"Tell me more about the mountains. I have forgotten much," he said.

She talked of other peaks, mesas, valleys, and watering places, and incidents connected with them.

"Our mountains have many legendary places which I want to show you," she concluded.

"I want to see them all with you," said Teta.

"The mountains are harsh and rugged, and at times they are cruel, but I love them. They are like our people. Perhaps they have helped make our people as they are."

"Yes, they are like our people."

## CHAPTER 11

CHEPA awoke at dawn. The moon was low in the west, and all the stars had faded except a large blue-white one in the east. Teta was sitting beside her, with his face toward the Hill of the Rooster. Her eyes drank in his broad shoulders, the smooth dark skin which covered the muscles of his back, the shallow trough down his backbone, the narrow waist, and the small flat hips. She was possessed with a desire to run her hand down his back, but she glanced at his face and saw he was not really looking at the blue basaltic mountains. He was deep in thought, his gaze turned inward.

"What does my leader have on his mind this morning?" she asked.

"Food," he said, laying his hand on her.

"Are you hungry?"

"No, but the people in the camp will be if we do not obtain provisions within a few days."

"I know. Food, or the lack of it, is forever on our minds. Many times we have gone without it for days. We always

have three problems, food, ammunition, and the Mexican Army. Compared with the danger of starving, the menace of the Mexicans seems unimportant sometimes, yet they are the reason for the other problems."

"I was thinking we should send to the cave beyond Bejoribampo for the food we left there after we took the train. There is a new Mexican garrison at Bronces, a few miles from the cave, and the longer we leave the food the more likely the Mexicans are to find it."

"We should not delay," said Chepa.

"I have been considering whom I should send in charge of the party. Only my men know where the cave is. Primero and Nacho are my two best leaders. Primero is more cautious, but Nacho is more daring and thinks more quickly in a crisis. Primero would plan every move carefully, especially how to bypass the Forts of Bacatete and Tetacombiate. Nacho would not think ahead, but would depend on working out of a situation after it developed. He would be tempted to fire a few shots at one or both of the forts as he went by."

"You should send Primero," she said. "There will be many other expeditions where Nacho will be the better."

"Also, we have the matter of bringing the food, which amounts to about six hundred kilos of corn, frijoles, coffee, and sugar. With twenty-five kilos to a man, it would take twenty-four of our thirty-four men to carry it at one time. Another plan would be to send out a burro-stealing party. Six burros could carry the loads of twenty-four men."

"We should do both," she said. "If the burros can be found, the men can guard the burro train. That many men could beat off a considerable attack. When the party returns, we could have the burro meat with the corn and frijoles."

"It is true," he said. "If burros cannot be found, there will be enough men to bring the food. We will send Otero and five men to look for burros. Primero and seventeen men can meet Otero at Bejoribampo one week from today."

"It is a good plan," she said.

"Which direction do you think Otero should go?" Teta asked.

"To the west. They will come nearer finding burros in the vicinity of San José de Guaymas, and it will be much easier for the party to return across the lower Valley of Guaymas than from the east or the north."

"It is well," said Teta. "Should we let women go with Primero?"

"No. There may be skirmishing and need for quick maneuvering and fast retreat. Women would only be in the way."

"Chepa, you have much knowledge of mountain warfare."

"It is a fine thing to give advice and not be responsible for how it turns out," laughed Chepa.

"We have yet another problem. The ammunition for our American-made rifles is running low."

"The American rifles are more efficient than the Mausers," she said.

"We need to send a party to Tucson."

"Do you have money?"

"Some. Nacho and I have some gold which we found near Bejoribampo."

"We also have money collected from the ranches and shops we have raided. Trinidad has it and knows the amount," she said.

"Have you been to Tucson?" asked Teta.

"Yes. Two years ago."

"Would you like to go again?"

"If I could go with you, for pleasure, but that is impossible now."

"How long does it take?"

"Twenty-eight days each way."

"With a few days in Tucson, a party would be gone two months," said Teta.

"You are right."

"How does the trail go?"

"It goes north along the mountain ridges by Minas Prietas, Colorado, and Romo, east of Hermosillo. Then it crosses the valley of the Rio Sonora between Hermosillo and Ures to another mountain chain which extends north between the Rio San Miguel and the railroad to the valley of the Rio Concepción. The trail crosses the Valley of Concepción between Santa Ana and Magdalena to another mountain chain which goes north almost to Tucson, crossing the boundary between Sasabe and Nogales."

"Is there difficulty in buying ammunition in Tucson?"

"None. A big redheaded Texan there has all we can afford to buy. He is a friend to the Yaquis."

"Whom shall we send?" asked Teta.

"Trinidad knows the route, and he is reliable. Our biggest problem in sending parties to Tucson is to make sure the money is spent for cartridges instead of mescal or sotol. Trinidad never drinks, and if we let him pick his party, they will be back when they are due."

"Is it a trip for women?" he asked.

"Yes. There is little risk, and a woman can carry almost as much as a man."

"Trinidad should leave as soon as possible," said Teta.

"I have one request. Let us arrange for Jorge to go with

Trinidad. It will be exciting to him, and will give him two months to get used to your being our leader."

"But his wife?"

"She can go. Her baby is not due for three months. The journey will be good for her."

It was so arranged after the morning meal. Trinidad selected Jorge and three other men. The four had wives who wanted to go, making a party of nine. Otero chose five men for the burro-stealing expedition. Primero and seventeen men were to leave for Bejoribampo on the fifth day hence. Nacho was asked to waylay a courier between Arenas and Pitayita and bring in the courier's horse for food. Four men were unassigned. Nacho did not seem to mind that he was not included in any of the three parties. He gave the impression that he thought the expeditions would be uneventful and boring. Otero's party left by midmorning and Trinidad's in the early afternoon.

The following morning when Teta and Chepa came down the path from the mesa, Nacho was waiting for them at the narrow gap on the east trail.

"Hello," said Nacho, with a broad grin.

"Good morning," said Teta and Chepa.

Both noticed Nacho had his blanket and all his effects with him.

"I am leaving you," said Nacho.

They looked at him in amazement. "Is there anything wrong?" asked Teta.

"Nothing. You are a good and wise leader, but from now on I think you are going to be cautious, and you can do little until you get American ammunition. That will be two months. In the meantime I will go across the valley to the east and join the band of Jesús Matus. He is planning some raids to my liking."



"But, Nacho, we have several small raids planned."

Nacho gave his big disarming grin. "If we could take a train, or attack a garrison, or raid a ranch once a week, I would stay, but I know you are not going to do any of these things until Trinidad gets back, so I am leaving. When you plan something big, I will come back."

He extended his hand, "*Adiós*."

"Go with God," said Teta and Chepa.

After he was gone, Chepa said, "We should have argued more with him."

"I do not think so. Nacho is a killer, he kills for the love of killing; he will be happy in the band of Jesús Matus."

"All the same I hate to see him go," said Chepa. "He is a good man."

That night on the mesa Teta said, "Chepa, do you think I should go with Primero's party to get the food?"

"Why do you ask?"

"The expedition has importance, and I am the leader."

"If you went, I would go with you, but I do not think it necessary. Primero will manage. There are other things we need to do."

"I know," he said, "I have thought of many things. I want to talk with General Caumea. I should learn where the other bands are and get acquainted with them. I need to know more of the terrain to the north of us."

"All these matters are important," she said as she pulled him close and cushioned his head between her breasts.

## CHAPTER 12

THE next morning Avalardo announced that he and Lupe would leave for Torim that day.

"I have been expecting and dreading the day when you would say that," said Teta.

"I had rather stay, but I belong in the village."

"It is true. In Torim you are worth many men with rifles."

"Teta, let us go with them as far as Bacatete," said Chepa.

"It is well," said Teta.

The four of them went down the trail to the east. In the valley they turned south, but did not travel the military road; instead, they paralleled it at some distance, keeping in the brush lest they meet a Mexican detachment. They gauged their speed so as to arrive at the spring of Bacatete after dark. The spring is located where the narrow valley enters a great, broad valley which extends south beyond

Tetacombiate. The Fort of Bacatete is south of the spring and on a round hill.

They drank and filled their gourd canteens at the spring. Avalardo said, "Lupe and I must get past the Fort before the moon rises. We will leave you here."

They made their farewells, and when Lupe and Avalardo were gone, Chepa said, "Let us go up the mesa to our left and sleep in the old Yaqui fort there."

"You think it is safe?"

"Yes. I have done it before."

She led the way up the steep, rough trail to the top of the mesa. When the moon came up, Teta saw that the old fort was a rectangular breastwork of stone walls about four feet high and that it was on a point of the mesa overlooking the Mexican fort about a third of a mile below.

"In the morning we will have a fine view," said Chepa. "Now let us find a smooth place for our blankets."

"I will stay awake and keep guard," said Teta.

"It is not necessary. The Mexican garrison will not come up the hill in force tonight, and small parties never venture out. The Mexicans know too well that mountain Yaquis like to lie in wait for small parties."

Reassured, Teta found a place to spread the blankets. He soon learned that Chepa's thoughts were not concerned with the Mexicans in the fort below.

The pale, misty light of early dawn revealed the outline of the old Yaqui fort when Teta opened his eyes. The walls were made of sharp basaltic rocks. Some were porous; some were of a hard density; the colors varied from black-brown to rose-red. The rocks were carefully placed and fitted together without mortar or binding. Two willowlike *palo verde* trees grew through and out of the

wall on the side facing the Mexican fort. From the base of the opposite wall towered a vigorous saguaro with three arms. At one or two places the walls were a tumbled mass. At the back was an entrance protected by a circular extension. The entrance was not needed for entering or leaving the stockade, Teta decided, for nowhere were the walls so high but that a man could swing over them. "The entrance must make it possible for one to come or go without exposing himself to a line of fire along the rim," he thought.

"A likely place for snakes," said Teta when Chepa awoke and they lay on their blankets waiting for the sun to rise.

"One must see the snake before the snake sees him," replied Chepa. "There are few snakes left; like the deer and the javelina, we keep them eaten up."

The sun's rays were striking the tops of the ridges on opposite sides of the valley when Teta arose to look over the wall. He could trace the course of the dry creek which extended like a tiny green thread in the wide valley, until it disappeared in the purple haze toward the Fort of Tetacombiate to the southwest. To the north was the entrance of the narrow valley they had come down the evening before. A grove of trees formed an island of dark green in a dry, barren desert and marked the location of the spring of Bacatete. A similar grove, at the entrance of another narrow valley two miles to the west, was at the spring of Bacatetito.

The focal point of the plain below was the Mexican fort. The sun was shining on it now, and Teta could look down into it. He was fascinated by its design and construction, a fortress within a fortress. The outer one was circular, with four round towers placed equidistant and outside the

wall. The foundations were of native rock, and the walls were of adobe blocks made from the soil at hand. The structure looked as if it had grown from the earth of the low conical hill it crowned.

The inner fortress was square, with thick, massive walls of adobe. Wide windows, not over a foot high, whose sills were at shoulder height, served both for light and for port-holes in case an enemy ever breached the outer structure. The walls were covered with white stucco.

"Look at it through these," said Chepa, handing him a pair of field glasses which she had taken from a dead Mexican colonel a few years before.

The glasses brought the fort very close, and Teta could see the *mujeres* of the soldiers cooking at campfires in the courtyards. A number of soldiers were returning from the spring of Bacatete with water.

"Look, Chepa, they are going to execute a man."

She looked through the glasses. "That is where they always shoot them," she said. "I have watched it before."

The man, in Mexican uniform, stood facing the sun against the wall of the inner building in the quadrant nearest the old Yaqui fort. The angle of vision was such that Teta and Chepa could see the prisoner from his head to his feet, but only the back of the heads and shoulders of the four-man firing squad was visible. Smoke came from the rifles, the man fell, and a second later the report of the rifles was heard on the hill.

"I wonder who he was," said Teta.

"Probably one of our spies," replied Chepa, her voice cold. Teta glanced at her and saw that her face was hard and grim. He had not seen her in this mood since their first night on the mesa.

"If our rifles would only reach that far," she said.

"The two of us against a hundred of them, and behind such a stronghold as that?"

"I know it would be foolhardy, but that is what I always think about when I come here."

"Let us go away from here," Teta said.

"All right. We will go back over this small mesa, across a ravine to the foot of the Mesa of Chichibobuaje, and along the Pass of Bacatete to the Hill of the Rooster and south to Zamahaca. I will show you the place where the Mexicans captured the women and children and hanged the old men."

Teta and Chepa returned to their camp before Primero and his party were to leave for Bejoribampo. They spent the night on their mesa and when they awoke, with the moon in its fourth quarter overhead, Teta said, as he fondly watched Chepa's strong fingers twist her heavy black hair into thick braids, "Do you know where General Caumea's camp is?"

"Yes."

"Primero plans to go west to the Cañon de Mazocoba, then turn south toward Tetacombiate. Why not accompany his party as far as Cañon de Mazocoba, then we can go to General Caumea's camp."

"It is well," said Chepa.

"Tell me of General Caumea."

"He is tall, has thick gray hair and mustache, and a fine, intelligent face. He is very like you, only much older."

"Does he have any authority over the mountain bands?"

"Only that of an adviser, or leader of the leaders. When there is need for united action, he calls the bands together."

"Do the bands always respond?"

"Most of them do, but each decides for itself."

"When Primero leaves today, there will be only four men left to keep guard. Do you think we should leave until one of the parties returns?"

"The women can help as sentries. Leave it to Sosa. He will get them organized."

## CHAPTER 13

TETA and Chepa went with Primero's party down the west trail, and to the Cañon de Mazocoba, where Primero's party turned south; Teta and Chepa went north until they came to a secondary canyon coming from the west. It had its origin beneath the cliff which banded the Mesa de Mazocoba. Chepa led the way up a steep trail which wound through the bushes, trees, and cacti of the ravine, to a rock shelter where General Caumea had his camp. The shelter was somewhat like the one at Buatachive, but it was much longer and not so deep.

A sentry reported Teta and Chepa's arrival to the General, and he came a short distance down the trail to meet them. A look of pride and fatherly affection came over his face as he greeted Chepa.

"This is fortunate. I was going to see you tomorrow," he said.

"My General, this is my husband, Teta."

"I know. That was one of my reasons for going to see



you. I wanted to give you my blessing. You have it now."

"We are grateful," said Teta.

"I have wanted to see the man who disposed of the woodcutters and took the train."

"Neither incident required much ingenuity," said Teta.

"They came at times when action was needed. I want you to tell me about them. You can stay a day or two, can you not?"

"We can stay until the day after tomorrow," said Teta.

"We came only to visit with you."

"Good. We have much to discuss."

General Caumea took them into the shade of the rocky shelter. The place was cool after the heat of the midday sun. A woman brought cool drinking water in a gourd.

"Where do you get your water?" asked Teta.

"We have a spring close by. It is not large, but it supplies us."

General Caumea directed the women to bring food. It was thin stew, served in pottery bowls.

The General said, "I apologize for the food. We have no corn, frijoles, or coffee. My men are away now. When they return, they will bring something."

"Where do your men hunt?"

"To the north and northwest, almost to Hermosillo."

"That is a long distance," said Teta.

"It is often necessary. Our tribal lands go that far, and it is just that we collect our rents."

The stew they were eating was watery, with little meat. Teta thought he detected rabbit, snake, and some kind of bird. He noted that the women were thinner than Yaqui women usually were; the breasts of those nursing children were sagging, and the babies had small, skinny arms and legs. Teta concluded that the General's men had not been

having much luck bringing the "rents" through the cordon of forts.

"How many men have you in your band, General?"

"Twenty-two. We have a hundred and eighteen people, with women and children. It takes considerable food."

"General, have you always lived in the mountains?"

"All the time during the past twenty years. Before that I was many places."

"You knew the Yaqui chiefs Cajeme and Tetabiate?"

"Yes, I knew them both, but I knew Cajeme better than Tetabiate. I was with Cajeme for twelve years."

"Which was the better commander?"

"Cajeme. He was great; far better than any Mexican general who fought against him. Tetabiate was not a military man. He never conducted a campaign nor commanded in a major battle, but he was better loved by the Yaquis than was Cajeme."

"You have been at war against the Mexicans most of your life," said Teta.

"For more than forty years. I started when I was eighteen."

"Tell us about Cajeme," said Chepa. She had heard of him many times, but the stories about him always fascinated her.

"I joined him in 1875, when he began the war to regain the Yaqui lands, and stayed with him until he was traitorously shot, at the Three Crosses between Torim and Bacum, in 1887. We were in ten big battles and hundreds of skirmishes." The General continued for an hour reciting the military achievements of Cajeme.

"What about Tetabiate?" asked Teta, when the older man paused.

"He was elected Chief of all the Yaquis when Cajeme

was killed, and he retained the position until he was murdered by the *yoricoyote* Lorenzo Villa in 1900."

"Did he continue the campaign for independence?"

"Not in an organized manner, as Cajeme had. The war went on, but with the mountain bands operating separately."

"Then there were no big battles?"

"Only one, and it was not really a battle but a wanton attack on a concentration of Yaqui families. It occurred on the Mesa of Mazocoba, just above this place. Tomorrow we will go up there, and I will show you how it happened."

The next morning the General led them up a steep trail to the top of the mesa. They stood overlooking the Cañon de Mazocoba, and they could see a great distance in all directions.

"Is there water on the mesa?" asked Teta.

"No."

"Then how did so many Yaquis happen to be here at the time of the battle?" he inquired.

"They were camping below, in the Cañon de Mazocoba. Our great mistake was in having so many families gathered in one place. The *yoricoyotes* informed the Mexican General of our location, and he quickly planned a campaign to trap us."

"How?" asked Chepa.

"There were about twenty-five hundred Yaquis in the Cañon. Of these, five hundred were men. About half of them had rifles, and many who had rifles were without ammunition. The General sent a thousand troops, in three columns, against us. One came from Pilaes," he pointed to the northwest.

"Another came from Mazampo," he indicated the north-east.

"A third came from Bacatetito," he turned and nodded his head toward the south.

"When the Yaquis realized they were trapped in the Cañon, they climbed up here. The Mexican General quickly shifted his troops and surrounded the Mesa. An attack was then made from three directions. Our Chief, Pablo Apodepe, distributed our men with rifles and prevented the Mexicans from scaling the rim of the Mesa until all the ammunition was gone."

"I thought Tetabiate was the Chief," interrupted Chepa.

"He was not here. He had slipped away to bring reinforcements."

"What happened when the Yaquis' cartridges were used up?" asked Teta.

"The Mexicans poured over the rim, and a massacre began. More than four hundred Yaquis were shot or clubbed to death. More than a hundred women jumped off the cliff, over there, and killed themselves. A thousand women and children were captured. The remainder of us escaped over the west side of the Mesa. My father and brother were killed. My mother and sister jumped from the cliff."

"What happened to the prisoners?" asked Teta.

"They were taken to Bacatetito, but a hundred and forty of them were shot or clubbed on the way. Later the remainder were marched to the Fort at Guasima."

"No doubt General Flores made much money from the 'adoptions,'" said Teta.

"Much."

The next day Teta and Chepa went back to their camp.

## CHAPTER 14

PRIMERO and Otero's parties returned, bringing six burros loaded with food. Their only trouble had been in finding the burros. Otero had taken one within gunshot of the garrison at Santa Rosa.

With food for several weeks assured, Teta and Chepa prepared for a trip to explore the mountains to the north. Chepa spent an entire day grinding corn on a *metate* and cooking *tortillas*.

They went down the trail to the west, turned north for several miles, then west again to Los Coruas. The next day they went to Piedra Escrita, Inscription Rock, where they could observe with the field glasses the Mexican garrison in the Pass of Los Pilares. This was the only entrance from the west into the northern half of the Bacatete Mountains. Keeping to the east of the fort, they went to the watering place of Salsipuedes. The next day they kept along the highest ridges to Mosobampa, from there toward the north, and the mountains became lower until they broke

off completely at Punta de Agua, where a dry stream, coming from the east, passed between the Bacatetes and the next range to the north. They spent the night on a hill where they could observe the garrisons both at Raparo and Punta de Agua.

The following day they started southeast along the ridges overlooking the Valley of Agua Caliente. In the afternoon Chepa stopped suddenly and looked to the southeast, toward Arenas, through the field glasses.

"There is a small cloud of dust moving this way, just over the tops of the bushes," she said. "It is probably a courier, going from Arenas to Punta de Agua. The road is about a half mile east of here. Come, we will intercept him."

She set off down the ridge. Teta had never seen her run before; she was as fleet as a doe, and he found it hard even to stay in sight of her. He was out of breath when he came up to her after she had stopped.

"Here we can see him. The road is less than a hundred yards away," she said.

"Listen," she said after a moment. "There are two horses coming at a gallop."

Teta was still breathing too hard to hear.

"You take the one on this side, and I will get the other one," she instructed.

Teta could now hear the thudding hoofs of the galloping horses.

Chepa's face was stern as she quickly inspected her rifle, brought the gun to her shoulder, braced herself, and waited. Teta did likewise. The hoof beats were closer, now, and the cloud of dust could be seen approaching at a tangent.

"They will pass across that opening," whispered Chepa,

"and will be visible for only an instant. We must get them both. If one gets away, we will have a hard time of it."

The two horsemen came into the opening, one riding a pace ahead of the other. The two rifles sounded as one, and both troopers tumbled from their horses.

"Come, we must get the horses, but watch out for the men," said Chepa, running forward.

She approached them cautiously. "They are dead," she said. "Search them while I go after the horses."

Teta took their Mausers and ammunition and searched their pockets. Evidently it had not been long since payday. One soldier had ten *pesos*; the other, a corporal, had fifteen. The corporal was carrying some dispatches; Teta put them inside his shirt and hurried after Chepa.

He found her, some distance along the road, holding the bridle reins of both horses. The animals were covered with lather and were still breathing hard.

"They look worn out," said Teta.

"They are, almost. This is the way the couriers mistreat their horses; they ride as if the devil were after them. However, if these horses had not been tired, I might not have caught them."

Teta looked at the horses. "They do not have much meat on them, but we had better take them to camp."

"We must take them in alive. It would take several men to carry the meat."

"They will make our trail easier to follow," said Teta.

"I know, but it will be hours before the men are found and the alarm turned in at Arenas or Punta de Agua. With that much start we can make it. As soon as we reach the mountains we can travel without leaving a trail."

"I will see if the Mausers are worth taking," said Teta. He kept one and threw the other aside.



"We had better get away from here. Shall we ride?"

"Yes, to the foot of the mountains, then we will lead the horses. There will be less likelihood of being seen until we are over the ridge."

After they reached the mountains, Chepa followed a maze of canyons with rock bottoms, where the horses left no tracks. At sunset she selected a secluded by-canyon for a camp. After a supper of dry *tortillas* and water, Chepa cleaned her rifle. When she finished, she bored another hole in the stock. Her forbidding mood had passed; the events of the day had filled her with exhilaration.

Teta was silent and detached, as he had been since the killing of the couriers. He spread the blanket and sat upon it, looking out into the deepening twilight. Chepa came and sat beside him.

"What troubles you, *inpale*?" she asked.

"It is those men we killed today. I feel a sadness because of them, as I did when we shot the woodcutters."

"Does it always depress you to kill a Mexican?"

"Not when I killed the *hacendado* in Yucatan, nor when we met our enemies face to face in battle while I was with Zapata and Villa. It is different when you shoot from ambush a person who cannot shoot back and one against whom you have no personal grudge."

"Every Mexican courier is expecting to be ambushed. That is why they ride like they do. Never feel sad for the Mexican soldiers. They shoot mountain Yaquis on sight, and without warning. It is the kind of war we have to make; no quarter nor advantage is given or expected."

"But, Chepa, did the killing of the two couriers today not trouble you at all? Have you felt no regret?"

"None. No more than if they had been rattlesnakes. The only difference between killing a rattlesnake and a Mexi-

can soldier is that you can eat the rattlesnake afterwards."

"But we had never seen those two boys before. Perhaps they had no hatred for the Yaquis."

"If their mothers had been hanged by the Yaquis, if their baby sisters had been brutally murdered by the Yaquis, if their fathers had been sold into slavery by the Yaquis, if their lands had been taken by the Yaquis, they would have cause for hatred. As it is, those men were a part of a system which has done all those things to the Yaquis. We are in a war of survival. We shoot them, or they shoot us."

"How do you feel toward a *yoricoyote*? Can you shoot one without regard, as you can a Mexican soldier?"

"I can kill a *yoricoyote* when the occasion demands it, but I find no pleasure in it."

"Have you killed those who were not Mexican soldiers or *yoricoyotes*?"

"Yes, a few, while on raids."

"Did such killings never cause you to feel remorse?"

"We never kill such people unless it is necessary for our safety or for achieving our objectives. When it happens, it affects me deeply for days." She smiled sadly. "I still have a little conscience, even though it is deeply scarred."

"Chepa, you never cease to be a mystery to me. With your own people you are gentle and considerate. You are not selfish; honors and adoration mean nothing to you. As a wife you are as tender as the daughter of an *hacendado*. Tonight you can love with great passion; tomorrow you can kill without a pang of conscience."

"Only Mexican soldiers. I know I seem contradictory, but the Mexican Army made me that way in the *cuartel* at Hermosillo. Since then I have been possessed with only one thought, that is to avenge my family."

"I can understand that," said Teta.

"But what about you?" she asked. "The same thing happened to your family as to mine. You killed the woodcutters, men you did not know. You came to the mountains and joined a war to the death with the Mexicans. Why did you do it?"

"I have asked myself that question. I do not know the answer. I had to do it."

"I know the reason," she said gently. "You and I are much alike. Something happened to us both at Hermosillo, but it affected us differently. All I have done since has been for revenge; what you have done is for our people, our land, our freedom, and our future."

She pulled his head to her shoulder, and her fingers caressed the scar on his temple. "*Inpale*, you are like the Yaqui race. You bear this scar because of what has happened to our people. It fascinated me when I first saw it, that night at Avalardo's house, and it has had a compelling effect upon me since."

The next day they worked their way south, stopping at a watering place called Boure. As Chepa knelt to fill their gourd canteens, she looked toward the crest of a high hill. Its rose-quartz hardness was veiled with the rippling blue heat of late afternoon.

"*Inpale*," she said, looking up at Teta, "beyond you to the south is the hill called La Gloria."

Teta turned and regarded the peak for some time, then said, "Let us go to the top of this hill."

"Do you joke?"

"Never with you, *insewa*."

"I know a ledge near the summit. It is in the shade and will be cool."

"Let us go there," he said.

They left the horses when the ascent became too steep for the animals. Dense purple shadows enveloped the shelter made by the overhanging cliff. Chepa bounded lightly to the floor, followed quickly by Teta.

Chepa stood near the jagged rim of the ledge, looking across the deep valley to the southeast. The penetrating warmth of the sun had spent itself, but the rocks in the ridges and canyons reflected the stored-up heat, setting in motion shimmering rose-blue waves in the atmosphere. To the southeast a mighty, billowing thunder cloud towered beyond the black Mesa of Chichibobuaje like a heavenly backdrop. A breeze from the cloud pressed Chepa's thin cotton dress against her, outlining the firm contours of her body. She remained motionless, absorbed by the grandeur of the play of colors on valley, crag, and cloud.

Teta, behind Chepa, near the cliff wall, was aware of the magnificence beyond, but his eyes and thoughts centered on Chepa. Slowly he approached her and placed his strong hands on her shoulders, pressing her body back against his. Then he turned her toward him.

"Return to this earth and to me, *insewa*, one cannot find Glory alone." He lifted her in his arms and carried her to the base of the cliff.

Their coming together, then, was like the meeting of earth and sky in a summer thunderstorm.

*At first the air is warm and gentle, with an occasional flash and a distant rumble, the air becomes warmer and less gentle, warning flashes and rumbles are more distinct, the air is heavier as it caresses the eager earth, the air grows more tense and the earth more receptive, the embrace of the air is more ardent and the response of the*

earth more violent, the flashes and rumbles come nearer, the earth is expectant, more thirsty, a few drops fall from the air, the eager earth absorbs them and gasps for more, the air holds back, the earth cries, "Do not stop!" the air trembles with small intermittent rushes, the earth responds, there is a dash of rain, the earth quivers, the air is a series of violent gusts, the earth trembles and gasps for breath, there is a lull, the earth waits without breathing, thrusting gusts and short lulls succeed each other, the earth responds, the full force of the storm breaks in mighty crescendo, blinding flashes, earsplitting claps, storm and earth lock in passionate embrace, the storm giving, the earth receiving, the storm rends and crashes, the heavens give forth a flood, the earth rises to meet the flood with uncontrollable cries, the fury of the storm passes, the earth is motionless and inert, the storm recedes with long, low rolling of thunder, the earth sighs, relaxed, completed, and fulfilled, the storm is spent, the air is gentle and cool, the earth is refreshed and resplendent.

The sun was low when Chepa began, slowly, to emerge from the abyss of complete, blissful exhaustion. She pulled Teta's head to her bosom.

"Inpale, if we ever come nearer to Glory than that, we will be on the inside."

"The Hill of Heaven is well named," he said.

"Can we not stay here tonight?"

"Yes, I will take the horses down in the valley to the west, then I will be back."

"Go, but return quickly!"

## CHAPTER 15

Two days later Teta and Chepa were back at their camp, having returned by the road which went from the Pass of San José to Bacatete. The horses were turned over to Otero, to be herded until they were needed for meat.

A week passed, with parties being sent out each day to the east and west to watch for couriers or small details of Mexican troops. Teta and Chepa stayed at camp and spent much time in a secluded, shady spot in the day and on their mesa at night.

Late one afternoon when they returned to the camp General Caumea was there. He greeted them warmly and said he wanted to talk with them alone. Teta led the way to a place on the path to the *tinaja*.

General Caumea said, "Yesterday I received this letter from Avalardo. He sent word that you would read it to me."

Teta took the letter and saw that it had been written in Spanish for Avalardo by Ramon, the Secretary.

TO THE GENERAL CAUMEA:

I HAVE THE HONOR OF TRANSMITTING TO YOU A MESSAGE FROM THE MEXICAN GENERAL OF THE YAQUI ZONE.

A FEW DAYS AGO THE GENERAL SENT A MESSENGER REQUESTING THAT I COME TO ESPERANZA FOR A CONFERENCE. I WENT AND THE GENERAL TOLD ME THAT HE HAS BEEN DIRECTED BY THE SECRETARY OF WAR AND NAVY, THROUGH THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF SONORA AT HERMOSILLO, TO ARRANGE A PEACE CONFERENCE WITH THE WARRING YAQUIS IN THE MOUNTAINS WITH THE OBJECT OF REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING WHEREBY THE YAQUIS WOULD AGREE TO COME OUT OF THE MOUNTAINS AND LIVE AT PEACE IN THE VILLAGES.

THE GENERAL OF THE YAQUI ZONE ASKED ME TO ACT AS A GO-BETWEEN AND ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE SUCH A CONFERENCE AT VICAM STATION ONE MONTH HENCE, ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE FULL MOON.

I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER ANY GOOD CAN COME FROM SUCH A CONFERENCE, BUT I SUGGEST THAT YOU CALL THE LEADERS AND HEADMEN OF ALL THE BANDS TOGETHER AND SUBMIT THE GENERAL'S REQUEST TO THEM. IF YOU AND THEY SHOULD BE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD A CONFERENCE, LET ME KNOW THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE MOUNTAIN YAQUIS WILL AGREE TO SUCH A MEETING.

IT IS AN HONOR FOR ME TO WRITE THIS FOR YOUR SUPERIOR KNOWLEDGE, AND BE ASSURED OF MY ESTEEM AND RESPECT. LIBERTY FOR ALL YAQUIS!

YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

AVALARDO

General Caumea sat without comment for a long while. Teta and Chepa remained silent while the General pondered the matter.

At length he said, "I doubt that anything would come of a conference. It has been tried before."

"On the other hand nothing would be lost, if the proper precautions were taken," said Teta.

"The time the General suggests is short. It took two years of negotiation with Tetabiate to arrange the conference at Ortiz," said Caumea.

"It is short, but entirely possible," said Teta.

"How could it be arranged?" asked the General.

"By sending a messenger to each of the bands, asking them to meet at some central place one week from today to consider a peace proposal by the Government. Do you know where all the bands are located?"

"Yes, I know."

"We could use our men to notify all those south of Baca-tete, and your men for those north of Bacatete. Every band could have the information by tomorrow night."

"That is possible," said the General.

"We would be glad to have them meet here."

"You do not know what you are asking. They would eat all the food you have. It is better to meet at a spot where there is no camp, then everyone will expect to bring his own food or do without. A good place would be the spring called Higueras, south of the Mesa of Chunamove. It is centrally located."

"Whom would we ask to come? All the people in all the bands?" asked Teta.

"No. It would make too great a concentration and create a food problem. It would also give a greater opportunity for trickery, as at Mazocoba. We will ask only the leaders and such of their lieutenants and sergeants as they wish to bring."

"If it is agreed, all the men to



"It is well."

By dark the men had departed.

General Caumea said, "Now I must go back to my camp and get my men off early in the morning. They will not have as far to go as your men do."

Teta and Chepa walked with him to the bottom of the west trail, where the General left them.

On the way back to the camp Teta said, "What do you think of the conference?"

"I have little hope for it."

"It will be of interest to learn what is in the minds of the Mexicans," said Teta.

"Regardless of how it goes, I still have my vow to keep." The chill, steel quality of her voice left no doubt in Teta's mind what the future held for them.

The leaders and headmen of twenty bands gathered at Higuera. Only Jesús Matus was neither there nor represented. The delegation of the bands numbered from four to seven. In all, over a hundred men and a number of women were at the spring. Each group had brought at least one woman to do the cooking. With Teta and Chepa were Primero, Otero, and Sosa.

Some of the groups had arrived at the spring the day before. Others came during the night, and still others came on the morning of the meeting. Much visiting and exchange of information took place.

Teta noticed that the men of all the bands treated Chepa with a deference not accorded any of the other women. She was included in their groups, their discussions, and their councils as though she were a man. The other women remained apart and busied themselves with food and gossip, as is customary with Yaqui women.

Teta met the leaders of all the bands and their assistants, a matter Chepa made easy for him. Men were unconsciously drawn to her and they treated her with great respect. Teta noticed that many inquiring and appraising glances came his way.

In the afternoon General Caumea called the men and Chepa together and told them about the letter from Avalardo. Then he asked Teta to read the letter. The men were silent and attentive. Discussion got under way slowly. As questions were asked and opinions expressed, Teta observed that there was no enthusiasm for the conference. Martín Vega, whose camp was near Enmedio, was more articulate in his opposition than were the others.

"No good will come of it," he said. "It will be as it has always been in the past. The General will tell us that if we will go back to the river villages, the Government will give us the unused land and we can have schools and the protection of the Army. He will not tell us that the bit of land will be of no use to us without water, tools, and seed, none of which we have. He will not mention that we will be under the observation of the Mexican Army day and night. He will not say that if we are to keep from starving, we will have to work for a *peso* a day in the fields of the rich Mexicans at Obregon, Mexicans who have been given our lands and who irrigate their fields with water from our river."

Others more haltingly expressed the same thought. Teta had remained silent after reading the letter, but General Caumea asked, at last, for his opinion.

"I agree with Martín Vega," he said, "that there may be no agreement reached at the conference, but I think we should agree to meet the representatives of the Government, provided it can be done with the proper safeguards."

We have much to gain, and nothing to lose. If we have the conference, the Government will make a big show of it. There will be brass bands, flags, and long speeches by *políticos* with waxed mustaches and big bellies. All of that happened in Ortiz. But times have changed since the conference at Ortiz. Porfirio Díaz' government has been overthrown. We have had other governments, Madero, Huerta, Carranza, and now Obregon. Each one promised so much and did so little. Still, there is a change coming in Mexico. I felt it when I was with Zapata, and with Villa. Díaz' government listened only to rich Mexicans and foreigners, but the governments in the future will listen to the common people of Mexico. The people get their information through the newspapers. If we have the conference, writers for the newspapers will be there. What we say may be read by people in Mexico City, in Vera Cruz, in Yucatan, in Jalisco, in the United States to the north, and everywhere. We can make known the fact that it is our land we are fighting for. No immediate good will come of it, but if we can arouse public opinion in Mexico, we may be able to win back some of what we have lost. I am for the conference."

The men had listened intently, and no one spoke for some time. Teta looked from face to face, seeking a hint of response, but could see only stolid impassiveness. He glanced at Chepa. Her large dark eyes gazed at him with admiration, but she was grasping her rifle tightly with both hands as if to say, "This is the argument I understand best."

At last Martín Vega spoke, "I do not believe we will get any consideration from Mexicans, whether they are generals or *políticos*, miners or cattlemen, farmers or merchants. If they are generals, they want to keep the wars

going, otherwise they would not have a chance to get rich with contracts and the *mordida*. If they are *políticos*, they want an opportunity to graft in the distribution of Yaqui lands. If they are miners, they want to take our mountains. If they are cattlemen, they want our range lands. If they are farmers, they covet our valley lands and the water in our river. If they are merchants, they want to see other Mexicans take over all we have so they will have their own kind with whom to buy and sell. Public opinion has just one concern with the Yaquis, and that is to take over our lands."

The faces of the men indicated this was reasoning they could understand.

Teta responded, "Much that Martín Vega says is true. Many Mexicans are greedy, selfish, and wish to profit by a division of what we have; but there are millions of people who do not have a selfish interest in our affairs. They are schoolteachers, clerks, laborers, and many kinds of servants who work for other people. There are millions of other Indians who have lost their lands, and they have not forgotten. There are more people in Mexico who do not have a selfish interest in the Yaquis than those who do. What information, what facts, and what stories do these unselfish people get about the Yaquis today? Only the information the generals and *políticos* want them to have. The Yaquis, they say, are barbarians, they are uncivilized, they are stubborn, they are against all progress, they are cruel and inhuman. The story of every Yaqui raid is published in all the newspapers, but when my mother was hanged, my baby sister's head was broken, and my father and I were sold into Yucatan, not a word of it was known. This conference will give us a chance to get our side of the story to the people. We may have many friends

in Mexico, if we can make them aware of our condition and what we want."

General Caumea said, "It seems to me we might have something to gain from the conference. We could listen to the offers of the Mexicans, we would have the opportunity of giving our position, and we would not have to agree to anything contrary to our interests."

A number of approving nods and a few monosyllables revealed that the men were now beginning to favor the conference.

Martín Vega said, "I will agree to the conference so that we can tell the Mexicans what we think, but I will oppose giving anything to them."

No one else spoke in opposition, and General Caumea announced that he assumed the mountain Yaquis favored the conference. The next question was where it would be held and under what conditions.

"The letter said at Vicam Station on the first day of the full moon," said General Caumea. "I have no objection to the time, but do we want to meet them at Vicam Station?"

Martín Vega spoke, "We should not meet where there is a Mexican garrison. The Yaquis have been tricked too many times. At Vicam Station or Pitaya we could be ambushed too easily; they both have many places where troops and guns may be concealed. The Mexicans have but one purpose, that is to get the Yaquis out of the mountains. If they can accomplish that purpose by massacre and capture, they will not have to make any concessions."

"I agree," said Teta. "The meeting should be in a neutral place, removed from any Mexican military installations, and it should take place in the open where there will be no chance for trickery."

The General said, "Where, then, should the conference be held?"

Everyone had an idea, and no two were in agreement. The suggestions, arguments, and counterarguments went on until sundown, when General Caumea said, "We will adjourn until morning. In the meantime each of you give the matter further thought."

The debate did not stop. Private arguments and group discussions continued into the night. When the meeting resumed next morning, opinion had clarified on two points. One was that the conference should not be in the mountains, as it would give the Mexicans an excuse to bring in more military force. The other was that it should be held on the railroad, as the high Mexican officials would arrive by train and the Yaquis felt they should be kept as near the railroad as possible.

Someone suggested a place between Empalme and Ortiz. It was quickly pointed out that this place was too far from the mountains. The wide Valley of Guaymas, with its thick growth of mesquite and cacti, would offer the Mexicans an opportunity to slip a force behind the Yaquis and cut them off from the mountains.

Martín mentioned La Puente. Everyone smiled and looked at Teta, who grinned back and said, "I am afraid La Puente would have a bad flavor for the Mexicans. I suggest Oroz. It is at the very base of the mountains and is eight miles from the nearest Mexican garrison."

Oroz was selected, and General Caumea took up the conditions of the meeting. "We have in the mountains about four hundred men with rifles, not counting the band of Jesús Matus. I propose we inform the Mexican General that we will take one hundred Yaqui soldiers to Oroz, and

that he may bring one hundred Mexican troops. We can hold our other three hundred men just over the ridge northeast of Oroz. They will be within two miles of the meeting place, and in case of trickery they can cover our retreat to the mountains."

"The plan has merit," said Martín.

"It is good," said Teta.

"We will expect each band to send its leader and four other men to Oroz," said the General.

"Shall we bring our women and children?" asked one of the leaders.

"No. That was the mistake made at Zamahaca and at Mazocoba. We must avoid concentration. Our greatest strength lies in wide distribution."

"It is well," said several of the leaders.

"We will have Teta write our decision to Avalardo," said General Caumea.

"I do not have any writing materials. If it is agreeable, Chepa and I will go to Torim tonight and tell Avalardo what we have decided. We can return tomorrow night."

Approval was given by a general nodding of heads.

"It will be necessary for us to meet again when we learn whether the Mexican General accepts our conditions. We should know by two weeks from today. Let us meet again, then, at this place."

The second meeting at Higuera was brief. General Caumea had Teta read a letter from Avalardo. It stated that the place of meeting and the conditions specified by the Yaquis were satisfactory with the Mexicans, and that the General of Sonora, the Governor of Sonora, the General of the Yaqui Zone, other officials, and one hundred

Mexican troops would be at Oroz at nine in the morning of the first day of the new moon.

"Everything is arranged," said General Caumea. "We will expect the leaders and all the fighting men of every band to meet at the watering place called Palomas the night before the conference."

The meeting was over, except for the visiting, which went on the rest of the day and night for some of the delegations.

Teta and Chepa left in the afternoon. They were the only representatives from their band, the members of which knew in advance what Avalardo's letter contained as General Caumea had taken it to their camp for reading.

On their return trip they went east of Chunamove, Zamahaca, and the Hill of the Rooster. They slept that night at Paso del Obispo, the Pass of the Bishop. The next day Chepa shot a Mexican courier who was on his way from Bacatete to Torocobampo. They were unable to catch the courier's horse. That night Chepa put another dot on the stock of her rifle.



## CHAPTER 16

THE night before the full moon, the fighting men of all the mountain bands except those with Jesús Matus had gathered at the temporary water hole called Palomas. Chepa and the men of Teta's band were the last to arrive.

"Do you want to go with the group to Oroz?" asked Teta, after the evening meal.

"No," said Chepa.

"You would see the Generals and the Governor."

"That is what I am thinking of, *inpale*. Every time I see Mexican soldiers, something terrible happens to me. I will be on the ridge, watching you through the field glasses."

"As you say, but I would do better if you were there. General Caumea has asked me to act as secretary and adviser. He told me not to ever be more than an arm's length from him. He has also asked Martín Vega to be an adviser."

"That is good. Martín is honest, and he speaks with conviction."

Later in the evening General Caumea asked Teta, "Who from your band is going to Oroz?"

"Primerero, Sosa, Otero, and Antonio."

"Chepa is not going?"

"We have discussed it. She is not going. As you know, she has an obsession for killing Mexican soldiers."

"Very well. She is the most feared of all the Yaquis; she might be disturbing to the Mexicans. We have another need of her. She can be the leader of the reserves we will leave behind the ridge. She will be acceptable to the men."

General Caumea called all the men together around the cooking fires to tell them about the plan for the next day. "We are to take one hundred men to Oroz, and the Mexicans are to have a hundred soldiers. Each of our bands will furnish five men. We must be cautious and prepare for trickery. We do not want anything like what occurred at Pitaya many years ago to happen here. Those of you who do not go to Oroz will remain just this side of the ridge. Chepa will be our *segundo* for the day, and she will be your leader. She will station lookouts for five miles along the ridges on either side of Oroz. If Mexican troops arrive from any direction, your entire force will move down the slope toward Oroz to cover our retreat. Tonight Martín Vega will be in charge of the sentries. We will be ready to leave this camp in the morning at sunrise."

The next morning, shortly before sunrise, Martín Vega came hurrying to General Caumea. "There is a lone horseman, a Mexican, coming up the draw from toward Bejalbampo. Shall we shoot him?"

"No, he must have a mission. Bring him to me."

When Martín Vega returned with the horseman, it was evident he was a Mexican colonel.

"General Caumea?" he said as he rode up.

"Yes."

The Colonel dismounted.

"I am Colonel Ramos. I have come to see what has occasioned your delay."

"Our delay?"

"Yesterday General Tierra and his party waited all day for you at Oroz."

"But today is the first day of the full moon."

"I told the General you would consider today as the time for the conference. By the Almanac, the moon became full yesterday afternoon. The General insisted that yesterday was the meeting day; his party remained at Oroz all day. When you did not arrive, he became nervous and impatient. In the late afternoon he said we would call off the conference and his train would return to Guaymas."

Chepa and Teta had been standing some distance from the General when Colonel Ramos rode up. Both had watched him dismount, and they continued inspecting him as he talked with the General. Suddenly Chepa unslung her rifle. Teta looked at her and saw the same determined set of her features she had when she shot the couriers. He grasped the barrel of her rifle and kept it pointed toward the ground.

"Chepa, what is it?"

She gave him an impatient glare and tried again to bring the rifle up, but he held it fast.

"This is the Captain who gave the order to hang our mothers. He is the only Mexican there that day whom I remember. I have been searching for him ever since."

Teta, still holding Chepa's rifle, looked again at Colonel Ramos. He remembered the man now. The Colonel was the man who had laid his hand on Teta's shoulder, had

spoken kindly to him, and had sent him to the stockade to be deported to Yucatan with his father.

"Chepa, this is not the time nor the place to shoot him. He has done a brave thing by riding into our camp, and he is here on a mission of peace. You must wait until conditions are different."

Her tensions relaxed somewhat, but her eyes remained hard and cold.

"Very well, I will wait."

The Colonel was still speaking to General Caumea.

"I explained to General Tierra how you could have interpreted the date, and got him to agree to return with his train from Guaymas this morning. After his train departed, I came to look for you."

"Did General Tierra know you planned looking for us?" asked General Caumea.

"No. I said nothing to him about it; he would not have permitted it."

"Colonel Ramos, why did you come for us?"

"I am most anxious for the conference to take place. I am responsible for the idea. I have been stationed in the Yaqui Zone for twenty years and have become an admirer of Yaqui courage and fortitude. I understand your point of view and what you are fighting for. Many times I have had to carry out disagreeable assignments against you, duties I took no pleasure in. I have given much thought to how the war between the Mexicans and the Yaquis might be terminated in a manner satisfactory to both sides. I have a friend who is now an adviser to the President. A few months ago, while on leave in Mexico City, I got him to confer with the President about arranging a peace conference. The President agreed, and it would have been scheduled a month ago had it not been for the

holdup of the train. You see, I have much interest in the conference. I rode all night to find you. I went first to Guepare, then to Bejalbampo, then came here."

"Colonel Ramos, you are a brave man to ride unannounced into a camp of hundreds of mountain Yaquis. We are glad to learn there is one Mexican officer who is understanding. We are ready to start for Oroz. A hundred of the men will go with us. Excuse me a moment before we go."

General Caumea went to Chepa, who still held her rifle with a firm grip, while Teta watched her apprehensively.

"Chepa, keep the reserve here until we are out of sight, then follow to the position where you are to keep watch. It is best for the Colonel not to know of our plan to have reinforcements at hand."

"We will do as you direct, General," said Chepa.

The General then called forth the hundred men who were to go to Oroz. Colonel Ramos, leading his horse, walked beside General Caumea. Two hours later, when they reached the ridge overlooking Oroz, a train was waiting on the side track.

"General Tierra and his party are there," said Colonel Ramos, evidencing considerable relief.

When General Caumea's party reached Oroz, they saw that the Mexicans were making the occasion an impressive one. A stage had been constructed, with an awning to provide shade. Flags and bunting of the Mexican colors gave the meeting place a patriotic and festive air. On the stage were a table and a dozen straight chairs.

As General Caumea's party approached, two lines of Mexican troops, one extending forward from each side of the stage and facing inward, presented arms while a band, at one side, played a military air.

The official party of Mexicans was waiting in front of the stage. When the band finished playing, one of the generals said, "General Caumea, I am General Tierra, Chief of the District of Sonora. I have the honor to introduce his Excellency, Francisco Yesquero, the Governor of Sonora; General Luis E. Peña, Chief of the Yaqui Zone; and Senor Villareal, of the Department of War and Navy."

Then he introduced several merchants from Hermosillo and Guaymas. There were also two newspapermen. No one offered to shake hands. General Tierra was polite, and formal, and cautious.

General Caumea said, "This is Martín Vega, my *segundo*, and Teta Valencia, my secretary."

General Tierra accorded them a glance and the merest hint of a stiff nod. Teta was resentful of such casual recognition.

The General turned to Colonel Ramos. "Colonel, I have been worried since I arrived this morning and learned of your expedition."

"It was of small consequence, sir."

Teta sized up General Tierra, the Governor, and the other members of the official party. They had certain physical traits in common; they were all well fed, rotund, and had full faces and jowls. Each had a mustache. Some mustaches were long and droopy, some were waxed and stood out straight on either side, others were clipped short. A few of the party had an air of genuine dignity, others were merely pompous. The civilians all wore black suits and high-topped leather shoes; although the day was hot, each wore a vest, across which was strung an imposing gold watch chain.

General Caumea contrasted oddly with the Mexicans. He was taller than any of them, erect, and lean; he wore a faded blue shirt and trousers, and *huaraches*; his feet

were cracked and calloused, yet the dignity of his bearing set him apart. His iron-gray hair and mustache, and softly lined, intelligent face added to his distinguished appearance.

General Tierra said, "General Caumea, will you and your two aides be good enough to join us on the platform?"

He led the way up the steps, followed by the Governor, General Peña, and Colonel Ramos. The civilians of General Tierra's party waited for General Caumea, Martín Vega, and Teta to ascend. General Tierra took the chair behind the table. On his left, as he faced the front, were the Governor, General Peña, and Colonel Ramos. General Caumea was immediately to his right, then Martín Vega and Teta. The civilians took the chairs on the back row.

Teta looked at the people in front of the stage. The Mexican soldiers no longer presented arms, but stood at "parade rest," their rifle butts on the ground. The Yaqui soldiers, a head taller than the Mexicans, were bunched informally between the lines of Mexican soldiers, their rifles in various positions. The Mexicans kept their eyes rigidly to the front. The Yaquis kept their eyes on the Mexicans.

To the left of the stage, on the opposite side from the band, was a group of Government Yaquis, *yoricoyotes*, armed in the same manner as the Mexican soldiers, but without uniforms. They wore khaki trousers, khaki or blue shirts, and shoes. All were fat and had smooth, greasy faces. In front of them with an indolent, ruthless appearance and the eyes of a killer, stood one with the insignia of a Mexican colonel on his shirt. He wore an officers' automatic pistol and carried no rifle.

"That is Pluma Villa, figurehead Supreme Chief of all



the Yaquis," thought Teta. He looked closely at Pluma Villa and mentally compared him to General Caumea, Avalardo, and a dozen other respected and influential Yaquis he knew.

The Government-fed, -clothed, and -paid *yoricoyotes* contrasted sharply with the lean, hard, small-waisted mountain Yaquis, with their frazzled shirts and trousers, tattered straw hats, and cracked, calloused feet shod with worn *huaraches*.

General Tierra was on his feet, tapping on the table.

"It gives us great pleasure to meet here today with the fearless and courageous warriors of the Yaqui tribe. Your stubbornness and skill in battle are well known. As opponents to the Mexican Army, you have always given a good account of yourselves."

He paused and looked at the Yaqui faces in front of him, attempting to gauge their response. Their stolid, masklike countenances revealed nothing. They were listening, but at the same time they were keeping wary eyes on the Mexican soldiers. Primero and Otero moved casually about, outside the crowd.

"I extend to you the greetings and felicitations of the President of Mexico. He is most desirous that this meeting will bring an end to hostilities and that peace will come to the Rio Yaqui, the Bacatete Mountains, and to all of Sonora. I will introduce to you now the Governor of Sonora, who will tell you of the earnest desire of the people of Sonora to live at peace with the Yaquis."

The Governor, in an oratorical and grandiose style, did his best to impress the Yaquis with the power of the Government, the stability of the people, and their concern for the Yaquis. He dwelt on the vitality and ruggedness of Yaqui character. He foresaw the time when all differences

would be laid aside, when Yaquis and Mexicans would become fused into one people. When that time came, the Sonorans would be the tallest, bravest, and most intelligent race in Mexico. Then Sonora would furnish the leadership of the nation, and men of Yaqui blood would run the affairs of the Republic.

When he finished, he drank a huge glass of water. As he put the glass on the table, he frowned at it like one unaccustomed to the taste of water.

"What he says may have truth in it," Teta thought. He looked at the impassive faces in front of him, and his mind questioned the fact that the Governor would live to see his predictions come to pass.

General Tierra stood up again and came directly to the purpose of the conference.

"I am directed by the President of the Republic to tell you that an end must be made to the Yaqui depredations which constantly occur. The President is a great admirer of Yaqui courage and is tolerant of their mistaken point of view, but he cannot permit the state of rebellion, the flaunting of the laws of Mexico, the attacks on the military forces, the massacre of civilians while engaged in their legitimate occupations, the raiding, plundering, and burning of the homes of peaceful farmers, ranchers, and merchants, the torture and murder of innocent people, including women and children, the holding up and robbing of trains, and the interference with the mails and business of the Government. The President is determined that these outrages must cease.

"But the President has a big heart, and he is just and forgiving. He has authorized me to make you offers which are most reasonable. If you, General Caumea, and your people will come out of the mountains and live peacefully

in the river villages, the President is willing to make generous concessions."

General Tierra took a pair of black-rimmed spectacles from his pocket and put them on. He fumbled among some papers on the table, found the one he wanted, and began to read:

*The President will accord full amnesty to all people in the mountains for crimes previously committed against the peoples of Mexico.*

The General paused, pulled the spectacles out toward the end of his nose, and looked over them at the Yaquis in front of the platform. "This means that no one will be tried for any killing or robbery."

He adjusted his glasses and looked again at the paper.

*To you, General Caumea, he will give a commission as a Colonel in the Yaqui Auxiliary Battalion with full pay for life, and to each leader of a band he will give a commission as a Captain, with pay for the same for life. Each man may enlist in the Yaqui Battalion at pay according to his rank. No formal duties will be required. You will live in your homes in the river villages, and you will be paid every ten days by the same officer who pays the Mexican Army.*

General Tierra took his spectacles off and looked at General Caumea and at the men in front, but he could detect no response in any face. He replaced the spectacles and continued.

*Each man will be given five acres of land in the valley of the Rio Yaqui. To those who wish to cultivate the land, additional acres will be given according to the requirements of each. The Supreme Government will*

*dig canals on the north side of the river, and sufficient water will be diverted to supply the needs of all Yaqui farmers.*

He paused for a moment, waiting for the Yaquis to ponder the matter of the land.

*The Government will provide schools in the valley for all Yaqui children and will make it possible for those who wish to go away to professional schools to prepare as lawyers, doctors, priests, or for careers in the Army and the Navy.*

General Tierra laid the paper on the table, removed his glasses, and said, "The President wishes me to say that if the mountain Yaquis will accept his proposal, he can foresee the day when each family will live on its own land in a comfortable house with white walls and a tile roof. Each will have an irrigated field of cotton, corn, wheat, melons, and vegetables. Every farm will have chickens, cows, hogs, goats, and horses. Everyone will be well fed and well clothed, and the children will be plump and healthy. Machinery, owned by the villages, will do the hard work and eliminate the drudgery. All these good things the President wishes to see happen to the Yaquis.

"General Caumea, I hope this offer will appeal to you and your men."

General Tierra sat down. His presentation had been conciliatory and sincere. Teta was convinced that the General believed that the picture of contentment and prosperity could come to pass. He then wondered what General Caumea's answer would be. The Yaqui General, he knew, could neither read nor write. With the exception of a few trips to Tucson for ammunition he had never

been out of Sonora. "Yet," Teta thought, "he has a fine mentality and a wealth of information, a mind trained in logic, a conviction as to Yaqui rights and aspirations, and a thorough knowledge of the history of the Yaqui people."

General Caumea rose slowly and remained standing in front of his chair. For a moment he was undecided about what to do with his hat. It was a custom with the Yaquis to keep their hats on while in conference, but the Mexicans had removed their hats when they mounted the platform, so he had done likewise. As he stood fumbling with his hat, Teta reached over and took it from him. For this the General was grateful; now he could concentrate on what he wished to say.

"General Tierra, we appreciate the felicitations of the President. We have listened with interest to the long list of crimes charged against the Yaquis. Many of the incidents, I am sure, are true. Some of the incidents may have been crimes, because we have criminal Yaquis among our people just as you have criminals among your people. Most of them are not crimes, but the unfortunate events of a state of war, a war which has been waged against the Yaqui nation since Nuño de Guzman appeared at the Rio Yaqui in 1533. The Yaquis met him there and asked him to go back and leave them in peace, but with his horses and guns he forced his way across and, like a bandit, took that which did not belong to him, women, corn, and turkeys. The Yaquis gathered and drove him away, and the war has been on ever since, a war which the Yaquis did not seek and which they tried to avoid.

"What has been the cause of this war? The greed and selfishness of the Spaniards and later the Mexicans. They had nothing that the Yaquis wanted, but the Yaquis had much they wanted, land, minerals, and people to enslave

for work in the mines and on the ranches. They wanted our women to gratify their desires.

"For centuries before Guzman came, the boundaries of the Yaqui lands were known and respected. The Yaqui territory began at the mouth of Arroyo de Cocoraqui, extended up it to its source, north to Sahuaripa, west to Hermosillo, and south to the Gulf of California at a point west of Guaymas.

"The Yaqui nation has never given up its title to any of that land. If we ever owned it, we still own it. All the depredations you spoke of have taken place within the limits of the Yaqui boundaries. Every *yori*, whether Mexican, American, or English, who has settled inside our boundaries is a trespasser bent on taking that which belongs to us. If a man enters your house and takes what belongs to you, your law permits you to shoot the robber, and you have committed no crime.

"If Yaquis go to the ranch of a *yori* who has settled on their land, and if of necessity they kill the ranchman and his men and take his cattle, they have done what you would do to the robber in your home. By Yaqui custom, which is the same as yours, they have committed no crime, but have exercised the right of all men to protect that which is theirs.

"You built a railroad across our land without our consent and against our wishes. If we took every train which passes, we would be justified by your law.

"One thing the *yoris* have never understood. The Yaquis love their land. It is a passion with them. They have fought four hundred years to keep it.

"From the President's point of view, and that of the *yoris*, the concessions are generous, but they are completely unacceptable to us. The picture of the future

which the President foresees is for a Mexican community, but it has no appeal for a Yaqui.

"The President has given his ideal for the future. I will tell you what the Yaquis want.

"We want all Mexican troops removed from the Rio Yaqui, the Bacatete Mountains, and the Valleys of Agua Caliente and Guaymas.

"We want all other *yoris* removed from the area.

"We want the railroad, the telegraph and telephone lines taken up and moved away. Let them build around our country to the north and the east.

"We want to be free to run our own affairs without interference.

"In the future we want it to be possible for a Yaqui family to live in a *carrizo* house surrounded by mesquite, *pitaya* and saguaro, with the woods restocked with deer, javelina, and wild turkey.

"Under such conditions we could enjoy our most precious possessions, our land and our freedom."

General Caumea sat down and looked at General Tierra, then at the other members of the Mexican delegation. Their faces manifested varying degrees of incredulity. The complete rejection of the President's generous terms was beyond belief. This turn of affairs, aided by the heat of the day, made the Mexicans perspire. Their collars wilted, drops of perspiration ran from their faces, and large wet areas appeared under the arms of their coats and jackets. The civilians fanned themselves with their Panama hats, General Tierra used a sheaf of paper, and General Peña his Army hat. The Yaquis, who were accustomed to hot weather, were unperturbed.

Governor Yesquero spoke without rising, but with ardor, "Your proposal, General Caumea, is unthinkable. It would constitute a state within a state."

"Is that not what the Yaquis have always maintained, at least in the mountains?" asked General Caumea.

"But the Government has never admitted nor sanctioned it," said the Governor.

"Even during the persecution of Porfirio Díaz the Yaquis held the Bacatete Mountains," said General Caumea.

"If the Government permitted the Yaquis to become an independent, self-governing state, the Mayas in Yucatan, the Totonacs in Vera Cruz, and many other tribes would have a right to demand the same. Mexico would fall apart and become a collection of primitive Indian states," said the Governor.

"If the Mayas, the Totonacs, and others had fought for their land and their freedom as we have, they might be in a position to demand it," said General Caumea, unsmiling.

"The Government is offering to give each of you land, and you will have the same freedom as the other nationals of Mexico," said General Peña.

"Whose land does the Government offer to give us?" asked Teta.

"Lands along the river," said General Peña.

"Who now has title to the lands which the Government proposes to give us?" asked Teta.

"The Government owns the lands," said General Peña.

"How did the Government acquire title to these lands which have always belonged to the Yaquis?" asked Teta.

General Peña was unable to answer.

Governor Yesquero said, "The Government's title is based upon the principle that a sovereign state has title to all the indigenous resources, land, minerals, timber, everything within its boundaries."

Teta replied, "That is the same rule by which the Yaquis claim the same lands, and the Yaqui title is far older than the Spanish or Mexican claim. In the time of Benito Juárez



rez, the Yaquis had over six million acres. That amounted to three hundred acres for each of the twenty thousand Yaquis. Now the President tells the mountain Yaquis that if they will come out of the mountains the Government will give each of them five acres. The Government's position is like that of a robber who takes three hundred pesos from a man. When the man resists, the robber says, 'I will give you back five pesos of your money, provided you will be good and say no more about it.'"

Before anyone could reply to Teta's comments, Martín Vega asked, "If the Yaquis should leave the mountains, what would happen to the lands there?"

Governor Yesquero replied, "The lands are a part of the national domain. The Government would decide what to do."

"And the Mexican and American cattlemen and miners would take them over," said Martín Vega.

"That would be putting them to better use than ever before," said one of the merchants from Guaymas, leaning forward in his chair.

"Would that be just?" asked Teta.

"It would be progress," said the merchant, heatedly.

Martín Vega asked, "If the mountain Yaquis were to accept the President's offer, what guarantee would we have that the agreement would be kept by the Government?"

"The Government will keep its agreement," said General Tierra.

"It has not done so in the past," said Martín. "Porfirio Díaz professed to be a father to the Indians, but he gave over a million acres of Yaqui lands to the family of General Flores. Then he permitted the Richardson brothers, Charles Conant, McDonald, and other Americans to take

over large tracts of our lands. Many Mexicans were given smaller amounts. The Yaquis resisted, and President Díaz began his policy of extermination, deportation, and colonization of Yaqui lands by the *yoris*. Madero, Carranza, and Obregon, each in his turn, promised the Yaquis their lands for their help in overthrowing the existing government. The Yaquis helped put each in power, only to find the promises were forgotten as soon as the new government was installed. How can we know the present government will not forget?"

"You will have to trust the President," said Governor Yesquero.

"That I cannot do, and I am for rejecting the President's offers," said Martín Vega.

"Do you not realize that you may come out with nothing?" asked General Tierra. "When the Government wishes, it has the power to drive every Yaqui from the mountains."

"It is possible," said General Caumea.

"The Government has the right to enforce its authority," said General Tierra emphatically.

"I do not think a government could be that ruthless," said Teta. "Times and attitudes have changed since Porfirio Díaz and are still changing. If the Yaquis hold their lands long enough, public opinion in Mexico will recognize the justice of their claims. I do not favor giving up a single acre at this time."

General Caumea stood up, took his hat from Teta, and placed it firmly on his head. "General Tierra, you have our answer to the President's offer. We cannot accept his terms. With your permission, we will return to the mountains."

General Tierra rose. "General Caumea, I must warn

you, the Government is determined to stop Yaqui depredations on the lives and property of Mexican citizens. It cannot be done as long as your people are in the mountains. The President has offered you generous terms to leave the mountains peacefully. If you do not accept them, you may prepare for the worst."

"We cannot accept them," said General Caumea. He looked apologetically at Colonel Ramos, whose disappointment was plainly visible.

With dignity General Caumea went down the steps followed by Martín Vega and Teta. The Yaqui soldiers opened a path for them, then fell in behind.

## CHAPTER 17

A WEEK had passed since the conference at Oroz. Teta and Chepa were going up the trail to General Caumea's camp in the Cañon de Mazocoba. Teta had noticed that of all the bands represented at the watering place called Palomas, the members of the General's band were the most hollow of cheek, sunken of eye, and thin of limb. The condition was due, Teta thought, to the fact that the General's band was more closely watched and hemmed in by the Mexican Army than any other band. Today Chepa carried Teta's rifle and he had on his shoulder a sack containing ten kilos of corn, which he was taking to the General.

Carlos, the General's *segundo*, met them at the camp. Carlos was wearing only a pair of threadbare denim trousers and *huaraches*. His wife had washed his shirt and was now patching it with a remnant of another shirt.

"Where is the General this morning?" asked Teta.

"He has gone to attend his melon vines," said Carlos.

"Where, in the mountains, could he have a melon patch?" asked Teta.

"In the next *cañoncito* north of this one there is a bit of level ground, and a seep keeps it moist. The General planted melons there. Each day he goes to pull weeds and watch the vines. The General loves to see things grow. He is a farmer at heart."

"How has the hunting been since the conference?" asked Chepa.

"Bad. The women and children used up our reserve while we were gone to Oroz, and food has been a day-to-day matter since. For two days we had nothing."

"Today we have greens," said the wife of Carlos. "Yesterday Carlos found lamb's quarter at the base of the cliff up above."

"We brought you some corn. It came from the train," said Teta.

"We are grateful," said Carlos.

At noon the General returned. His melancholy face lighted up when he saw Chepa.

"Your coming gives me much pleasure," he said.

"How are the melon vines?" asked Teta.

"They have blooms, and three little melons have been set since yesterday."

The wife of Carlos brought an earthen bowl of the lamb's quarter. It had been boiled without fat or seasoning. There were no *tortillas* to dip with, so it was necessary for each person to use his knife to eat the greens from the common pot.

"General, how do you feel about the conference?" asked Teta.

"I was depressed by it. The problems which it raised have been on my mind constantly."

"Do you still consider our decision wise?" asked Teta.

"In my opinion, yes. If we had accepted the Government's conditions, we would have had to abandon the mountains, the Valley of Agua Caliente, and the Valley of Guaymas, and go to the river villages to live off the Government. For the Government it would be a good thing to pay us not to fight. Then the Army would not have to maintain the twelve garrisons around the Bacatetes and the six garrisons within the mountains. But what would happen to us? We would draw our pay, buy our provisions from the Mexican merchants, and get smooth and fat like the *yoricoyotes*. It would be very easy; we would become idle and soft, we would lose our initiative and incentive and be dependent on the Army paymaster. We would not resent a wrong nor demand a right, lest our pay be cut off. The men in the Government are very shrewd. They know the best way to break Yaqui resistance is for Yaquis to be dependent on the Government. If the mountain men ever accept the Government's offer, it will be the end for the Yaqui cause. It is better to have less in our bellies and more self-respect in our souls."

"General Tierra said the Government has the power to crush us," said Teta.

"It does. There is no doubt of it."

"Why do you think so?" asked Chepa.

"Because it can put a hundred men in the field to our one. It can get a thousand times more guns and bullets than we can. The Government's ability to make war is far greater now than in Díaz' time and ours is much less. The odds were great enough then. In fifteen years Díaz destroyed one-half of the Yaqui people. Many of those left escaped to Arizona. Now we have not one-third the number we had at the time of the Peace of Ortiz. Dissension

and factionalism has divided this one-third within itself. We must not deceive ourselves. The Government is stronger than it has ever been, and we are weaker."

"It seems that the Government would go ahead and exterminate us," said Chepa.

"It is afraid to. Under Díaz, the lands in Mexico passed into the possession of a few hundred *ricos*. That was what the Revolution was for, to return the lands to the people. If the present government exterminated all resisting Yaquis to get their lands, it would give some new *político* an excuse to start a new revolution."

"You do not believe the present government is concerned about returning the lands to the people?"

"No. The General who is President now says he has helped overthrow four governments because they did not return the lands to their original owners. Now, he himself is taking over the richest and best of the Yaqui lands. Given enough time he will become as rich as the Flores family under Díaz. However, he will avoid an open campaign of extermination. Instead, he will put a constant squeeze on us, buying off all he can, dividing the remainder, and killing off the mountain Yaquis a few at a time in such a way as to make it appear they are outlaws and murderers."

"All this makes resistance seem futile," said Teta.

"I do not mean to make it sound so. In resistance lies our only hope; we must hold out until the ideals of the Revolution have run their course. Then, as you said at Higuera, this government, or some future government, will be forced to recognize our rights and our claims. Our resistance must continue."

"Do you think the ideal life for the Yaquis, which you described at Oroz, will ever come?" asked Teta.

"I would like to think so, but in the end we will have to compromise. The longer we hold out the better conditions we can get."

"The winner will be the one with the most gunpowder," said Chepa. "That is what we need, more gunpowder."

General Caumea gave her the gentle, compassionate look a father gives his child who has made some impossible wish, then shook his head sadly.

"We must start home," said Teta.

"I will go with you to the valley below. I want you to see my melon vines."

When they reached the valley, they turned north toward Pilares for a fourth of a mile, then to the left up a very small canyon for a like distance. Here, in the moist earth, were growing a dozen vines, thrifty and healthy.

"Was this once a spring?" asked Teta.

"No, the seepage is too widely distributed to make a spring. We have dug holes all over the area, but have never been able to get the water to collect in one."

"The vines are beautiful," said Chepa.

"I love to watch them grow," said the General wistfully.

"I hope you have many melons," said Teta.

"To divide with you," said the General.

"And now, *adiós*," said Teta.

"Go with God," said the General.

Before the path turned, Teta and Chepa stopped to look back. The General was standing motionless, looking at his melon vines.

Two mornings later the General rose at daybreak, as was his custom. No one else in the camp was awake. The ashes of the fire were cold. In a basket which hung from a limb he found a *tortilla* left from the day before. Munch-



ing it, he went down the path. The under edges of scattered clouds in the east began to glow a faint saffron. The air hung without movement, and the General walked slowly, stimulated by the early morning sounds: the rare melody of a mocking bird, the quick scampering of a rabbit, the last notes of a cricket. When he reached his melon patch, the clouds in the east had become solid crimson. The lean old leader stood erect gazing at the clouds, the new light revealing the deep, thoughtful lines of his patrician face. The red in the sky changed to gold, and when the sun appeared above the rim of the Mesa of Chichibuaaje, he turned to his melon vines. Near the center of the seep he saw a weed, crisp with new growth. He walked to it, stooped, and pulled the weed, then stood examining it, amazed at its vigor. A fusillade of rifle fire rang out and echoed back and forth from cliff to cliff in the stillness of the morning. The General did not hear the shots. Three bullets had struck him in the chest and two in the head. He fell on his face, crushing his melon vines beneath his long, slim body.

It was midafternoon and so hot that the members of Teta and Chepa's band, except the sentries, were in the shade of the cliff. The men who had left early that morning to hunt had already returned, bringing a rattlesnake, an iguana, and three rabbits. Two women were grinding corn on *metates* and a third was roasting coffee beans, stirring them with a wooden spoon in an earthen pot over a bed of coals.

Primero walked to the water *olla* for a drink. As he lifted the gourd dipper, he paused with it in mid-air, looking toward the west entrance.

"Someone is running up the trail," he said. "It is Carlos, from Mazocoba."

Teta rose from where he was sitting with his back against the cliff.

"There has been trouble," he said.

Carlos was breathing hard from the rapid climb. Perspiration dripped from his face, and his shirt was soaking wet, a sign of unusual exertion, for Yaquis ordinarily do not sweat profusely.

"What goes, Carlos?" asked Teta.

"A very bad thing has happened," Carlos panted.

"Come in the shade and have a drink," said Teta, handing him a gourd of water.

Carlos drank deeply while everyone stood waiting for the news.

"General Caumea has been murdered."

Teta's face became rigid, his eyes contracted, but he gave no other sign of emotion as he regarded Carlos intently.

"When?" he asked at length.

"This morning, about sunrise."

"Where?" asked Chepa.

"At his melon patch."

Chepa's face had become gray, as it did when she looked down her rifle sights.

"How did it happen?" said Teta, still suppressing his shock.

"The General got up at daybreak and went to his melon patch. Just at sunrise we heard a volley of rifle shots, four or five in close succession, from the direction of the melon patch. All the men in camp ran to investigate. When we got to the melon patch, the General was lying among his

vines. We found where the assassins had shot from ambush. There were five of them, all wearing shoes, *yoricoyotes*. We followed their trail for half a mile to where they had left horses. They rode Mexican Army horses, shod with Army horseshoes. The tracks went to the garrison at Pilares."

"Pluma Villa and his *yoricoyotes*," said Primero, his voice heavy with contempt.

"What will happen next?" asked Chepa.

"A great and noble Yaqui has been assassinated; a thief, scoundrel, and murderer will receive a decoration and promotion from a grateful government," said Teta.

"Evidently one of the *yoricoyotes* who knows the region had been watching our camp for some time to learn the habits of the General; otherwise there would not have been five of them lying in wait at the melon patch so early in the morning."

"What are the plans for the General's funeral?" asked Chepa.

"We must bury him in the morning. We do not have a *maestro*, and only one *cantora*, but we will have some kind of a funeral tonight. We thought you might have a *maestro*."

"We have but one, Trinidad, and he is gone to Tucson. We do have two *cantoras*," said Chepa.

"I am not a *maestro*," said Teta, "but I was an acolyte for the priest in Yucatan. I do not know all the liturgy for the dead, but I do know parts of it and some other selections which may be appropriate. I will do the best I can."

"I have Trinidad's liturgy book. He left it with me," said Chepa.

"Then I will read the full service," said Teta.

"It is well," said Carlos, "the General should have the full service."

"We had better start at once," said Chepa. "All of our people will want to go."

"Primero, will you get enough corn, beans, and coffee to last our band and the General's for three days," said Teta.

The funeral service lasted through the night, with Teta reading the liturgy and the three *cantoras* chanting the responses. When morning came, Teta varied the procedure by giving a deep-felt and moving eulogy for the General.

The body was carried on a litter of small poles to the head of the canyon and buried in the talus at the foot of the cliff, at the very spot where the General's mother and sister had plunged to their deaths more than twenty years before.

Teta and Chepa's band stayed at the General's camp for the *novena*, which was held on the third night after the funeral. Teta again officiated for the *maestro*. The following day they returned to their camp.

## CHAPTER 18

"THE stars were never more beautiful," said Chepa one night as they lay side by side on the mesa.

"Do you prefer the stars to the moon?" asked Teta.

"I love the moon and the stars, each in its own way. The moon has many stages and moods, but if it shone every night, its light would become tiresome, and the stars would never have a chance to shine their brightest."

"Do you know any of their names?" asked Teta.

"I know the Yaqui names for some of them. My grandmother told me about them. She learned them from her grandmother."

"Tell me."

"Up there," she said, pointing, "are the Little Boy and his Dog. They once lived in Vicam. The two were inseparable. They slept together, ate together, hunted together, and went everywhere together. They would go farther and farther from home on their hunting expeditions. For a while they returned before night, then they began stay-

ing away two days, then three, and finally for a week. They were never lonesome, because they only wanted to be with each other. Then they went away and never came back. Their people searched months for them. Many stories were told as to what had happened. Some said they had gone beyond the Sierra Madre and were living with the Tarahumaras; others told how they had been killed by a mountain lion; one story explained how the little boy was bitten by a large rattlesnake and the dog stayed with him, guarding him from the vultures until the dog died of loneliness. Finally a great *sabio* was engaged to discover by divination what had happened. The *sabio* worked his powers for days, then the revelation came. The little boy and his dog had gone far to the east, to the high timberland of the Sierra Madre. A big timber wolf picked up their trail and followed them. The little boy climbed a tree, but the dog could not climb. The dog stayed at the foot of the tree and kept the wolf at bay all day and all night. The next day another wolf came, and soon another. The wolves attacked the dog. One got him by the throat and was choking the life from him. The little boy began to pray. He begged San Ignacio to save his dog. The good Saint appeared and lifted the dog in his arms. He took the little boy by the hand and swept them both up to Glory. He released them among the stars and said, 'Now you can hunt forevermore, and the wolves will never bother you again.' They have been going across the heavens ever since. They look so happy, see?"

She pointed again to the southwest at Orion and the Big Dog, only she had never heard of them by such names.

"That is a good story. I wish I had known it when I looked at those same stars in Yucatan."

Later she whispered, "Teta, we are going to have a son."

He said nothing for a moment, but gently pressed her to him.

"How can you tell, *insewa*?" he asked.

"I am sure. There is no doubt."

Again he was silent. His happiness radiated from deep within him, passed outward through his nerves, his muscles, and through his skin to her skin, her muscles, her nerves, to the center of her being. She knew from his touch that his happiness was overflowing.

"When do you think it happened?" he asked.

"On El Cerro de Gloria."

"I am glad. It was a seemly place."

"I have already thought of a name for him."

"Are you so sure it will be a boy?"

"I hope it will be."

"What is the name?"

"José Gloria."

"A fitting name."

"Teta, would you be terribly disappointed if it should be a girl?"

"If they could be like you, I would want a dozen girls."

"And if it is a girl, what name shall we call her?" asked Chepa, scarcely audible.

"Gloria, just Gloria. She would need no other."

"You make me very happy."

"*Insewa*, are you feeling well?" he asked.

"I never felt better."

"Do you not think that in the future you should be more careful and not make any long, hard trips?"

"You foolish man, you know little about Yaqui women."



With child, they are happiest and strongest, as you will see. Where you go, José Gloria and I will go too."

She went to sleep with her head on his shoulder. Her breathing was so light and gentle that he was not sure she was asleep. He remained awake, gazing at the brilliant stars until past midnight, when a pale moon rose to dull their luster.

Twice the moon had full and waned since Trinidad's party had left for Tucson. One afternoon, about a week after the moon had begun its third cycle, Otero came into the camp through the east entrance.

"The sentry told me he saw Trinidad's party turn up the trail from the valley below," he said.

Teta and Chepa walked to the entrance, down through the narrow gap, and waited. In a short time the party appeared, driving two loaded burros. It was evident that the trip had been a good one. Trinidad was beaming, Jorge was smiling, his wife, although much distended with child, was brimming with healthy vigor; the others looked as though they had fared well.

"Welcome, Trinidad!" said Chepa, then she hurried to speak with the others.

"Where did you get the burros?" asked Teta.

"Near Tucson. We paid a dollar for both of them. They have little value in Arizona, because they are not used for meat."

"Did all go well on the trip?"

"We had no difficulty, and we got every kind of ammunition we need."

"That is good."

"Misfortune struck while we were away," said Trinidad.

"You have heard about General Caumea?"

"Yes, and the conference at Oroz. We stopped with a band at Mosobampa the night before last. They told us."

That night on the mesa Chepa was preoccupied. She did not nestle in Teta's arms, but sat on the blankets, looking into the darkness.

"Teta, have you noticed the men are beginning to get restless?"

"I have observed it."

"They need to be doing something."

"What do you suggest?" Teta asked.

"A raid on the ranches to the north. Our corn and beans will soon be gone unless we get meat."

"We now have ammunition. We can plan an expedition at once. Why do you say we should go to the north?"

"In that direction we will come nearer finding what we need," said Chepa.

"I have never raided a ranch. What do we expect to get?"

"Horses."

"No cattle?" said Teta.

"Only to eat as we go, or meat which we can carry."

"We could drive them."

"They are too slow. Horses can go faster and are much easier to drive. In order to get horses we will have to go farther into the ranching country. The ranches closer in have been raided many times."

"It will take a week or ten days?"

"Yes, maybe longer. It depends on whether someone, a cattleman or vaquero, notifies one of the Mexican garrisons. Then there will be several cavalry forces out to cut us off from the mountains."

"In that case what do we do?" asked Teta.

"We slip through them if we can. If that is impossible, we make for the Arizona border, or scatter and at night slip past the Mexican forces and start for the Bacatetes, each person for himself."

"The scattering method has merit," said Teta.

"Only when the conditions are right. If we can maneuver until dark without being surrounded, our chances are usually good, but if we should be surrounded before dark, it is bad."

"Have you ever had to scatter?"

"Yes, three times. One time without loss of a single man. Another time we lost one man, and the other time three men."

"Were the men killed or captured?"

"Captured, and then hanged. We went back later and found their bodies," said Chepa.

"You have fought with the Mexican forces many times?"

"Yes, always when the odds were not too great. One time we completely exterminated a detachment which was about equal in number with our own. We prepared an ambush and left no survivors."

"At what place should we plan to leave the mountains?" asked Teta.

"It would be best to go almost to Punta de Agua by the same route we returned when you and I went there. We could pass the *cuartel* at night and go up the Arroyo de Guaymas, which is sometimes called the Rio Matope. By daybreak we could be twelve or fifteen miles beyond the garrison. We could hide and rest all day, then travel the next night. The next day we should be in country where horses are to be found. Once we have horses, we will come back as hard and fast as we can. If a courier has not been sent to the Mexican forts by then, we will have a good

chance of getting back past the forts before the Mexican garrisons are alerted."

"Chepa, you are a better leader than I."

"I have had fifteen years to find out these things, and now that I have told them to you, you know as much as I do."

"Whom should we take?" asked Teta.

"All the men except Trinidad and those who went to Tucson with him. They should be quite willing to stay and look after the camp."

"Do women ever go on ranch raids?"

"None except me; but do not think you are going without me!"

## CHAPTER 19

LITTLE Pedro drove his small flock of six milk goats and one he-goat to the hills each day. He was seven, and he had two sisters; one was six, the other five. Their father, a vaquero on the Rancho Noria, had been killed by Yaquis before the younger sister was born. The owner of the Rancho Noria had permitted the mother and children to continue living in the little one-room *jacal* house, with its dirt floor. She made cheese from the milk of the goats and sent it to Hermosillo for sale.

Pedro realized that all the family had to eat and wear came from his small flock of goats. He herded them diligently, always searching out the best places for them to browse.

To Pedro, each goat had a personality as distinctive as those of his mother and sisters. He found many things of interest in the arid, lonely land which to the casual stranger was devoid of life. He knew the homes and habits of many rabbits, ground squirrels, moles, and rats. He

made friends with a badger, a family of skunks, and a bull snake. Land terrapins, horned toads, and iguanas were not afraid of him. He knew the nesting place of scores of birds, and kept up with each pair from the time the first egg was laid until the last young bird had flown. Hours were spent watching a trap spider opening and closing the door to his house.

Pedro had a slingshot and a crude bow, with equally crude arrows. He passed many hours throwing or shooting target, but never at birds or animals, except the predatory ones. The only snake he ever killed was the rattlesnake, and the only animal he shot at was the coyote.

The desert hills were friendly to Pedro; he and his goats were happy there.

Juan Acosta owned the Rancho Vasitos, and a hundred breeding cows. His land was not fenced and his cattle grazed on the common range with those of a half dozen other small *rancheros*. None of them could afford to hire vaqueros. They exchanged work with one another. Twice a year they held a general roundup, and each new calf was branded with the same brand as the cow it was following. When one of the *rancheros* wanted to market some of his cattle, his neighbors helped him gather the animals.

Juan was in his thirties and had two consuming interests. Foremost was his family, which consisted of his young wife and two children, a girl of four and a chubby, dimpled boy of two. His other interest was lion hunting. Each winter he spent several days with the hunting parties of a professional lion hunter, an American from Nogales. Years before, while on a hunt, he had misjudged a lion he thought dead, and had taken a deep slash on the neck,

extending from the left ear to the left shoulder. The cut had narrowly missed a vital artery and had left a deep scar.

Juan had found a buyer for his three-year-old steers.

"Tomorrow," he told his wife, "I will ride to Rancho Casita and come back by the Ranchos of Citacata, Rafael and Cordoba to ask the *rancheros* if they will meet on Monday to help gather the steers."

"It will be a fine thing to have some money again," said his wife.

"Maybe we can pay what we owe and buy a new rifle." He waited a moment to see how she reacted to his suggestion of the rifle, then added, "And a sewing machine."

He placed the little boy on the saddle in front of him and rode away to inspect a windmill, the only modern contrivance he had on the *ranchito*.

Dolores Urrea was fourteen and beautiful with the fresh roundness of young womanhood. Her mother was dead, and she had no living brothers or sisters. Because she was all he had, and because he was a sentimental man, she was adored by her father, Adolfo, who owned the Rancho Casita. She was an industrious and dutiful daughter, devoted to her father and to her religious faith which had been deeply instilled in her by her mother.

She did her father's cooking, washed his clothes, and ironed his shirts. When he was away, she spent much time drawing water for the cattle from the well near-by. The well was hand-dug and walled with rock.

Adolfo knew his daughter was maturing and that he would soon be losing her, but the thought always made him sad and he quickly put it out of his mind. As yet Dolores was scarcely aware that she was an attractive and



enticing young woman, and was content with helping her father.

Two nights and a day had passed since Teta and Chepa's band had slipped by the garrison at Punta de Agua. The day had been spent hiding in a dense thicket. A hunting party had stealthily gone out and found a steer, which was killed with arrows lest the sound of a rifle shot arouse suspicion in the locality. The members of the band had gorged themselves with fresh meat cooked on sticks over a fire of dry, dead mesquite. Not only did they eat all they could, but they roasted enough to last them two or three days.

On the morning of the second day, after a short rest from the night's walking, the band scattered out as much as possible without getting lost from each other, and looked for horses. Chepa knew this was a region of small ranches, and that if horses were found, they would be in small herds.

About midmorning Chepa called to Teta, "Look, here are fresh Yaqui *huarache* tracks."

He saw that there were eight sets of tracks, keeping fairly close together and going in the same direction he and Chepa were.

"Let us see where they lead," he said.

On the next hill Teta pointed to buzzards circling in the air some distance away.

"They probably made a kill over there," he said.

They changed their course slightly to see what the buzzards were after. When they came to the place, they found a small Mexican boy on his back, his arms and legs outstretched. He had on only a pair of ragged pants and a

pair of Mexican *huaraches*. A tattered straw hat was near-by. His arms, legs, and belly were pinned to the ground with a dozen case knives with wooden handles, the kind used as eating utensils on American ranches. A slingshot, a bow, and some arrows were scattered about.

"Jesús Matus is in front of us," said Chepa as she and Teta looked at the boy's body.

"It is a bad thing," said Teta.

"Matus leaves no Mexican alive, and he loves to torture," said Chepa.

"When something like this happens, all Yaquis are blamed for it," said Teta.

Teta signaled and the other members of the band gathered.

As Primero approached, he stopped and called, "Some goats were slaughtered here."

Teta went to where Primero was, and in a small area were the hides, entrails, and heads of seven goats, freshly butchered.

When the band gathered around the boy, Teta said, "He has not been dead long, but the buzzards will soon be after him. Let us dig a shallow grave and put him in it."

The men dug a hole with their knives, pulled the case knives from the child's body, and buried him. When this was done, Teta said, "Matus and his men went northeast from here; we will go to the northwest. We will find no horses where they have been."

After traveling some distance to the northwest, the band turned northeast again. In the early afternoon, Otero signaled that he had found something. When Teta and Chepa reached the place, they saw a man, completely naked, lying on his face. The soles of his feet had been cut

off and he had been left alive in the hot open desert. He had been crawling on his hands and knees; how far, one could not tell without following his trail.

Teta stopped and turned the man over on his back. The only identifying mark to be seen was a deep scar from his left ear to his left shoulder. Teta felt his pulse.

"He is still alive, but will die soon," Teta said.

"Do you think he is dying from loss of blood?" asked Anastacio.

"Only indirectly. He will die of sunstroke, just as Jesús Matus knew he would."

"What do we do?" asked Primero.

"There is nothing we can do except leave him," said Teta.

"This man was coming from somewhere when Matus found him, a watering place or a ranch. If we go back on his trail, we will find where he had been," said Primero.

"That is true, but Matus probably had the same idea," said Chepa.

"Let us go," said Teta.

They followed the trail made by the Mexican for a half mile and came to the place where he was captured. The eight pairs of *huarache* tracks converged on the tracks of a horse. At the place of meeting there had been considerable milling around.

"Here is where they held him while they cut the soles from his feet," said Otero.

Primero followed the tracks made by the departing Yaquis for some distance. When he returned, he said, "They went that way, and the Mexican came from this way." He indicated a slight angle between the two directions.

"We will follow the horse's tracks," said Teta.

An hour later they came to a *ranch*o. At first nothing

seemed amiss. No one was to be seen, but cattle were standing around the water trough below the curbed well. Teta, by signals, directed his men to encircle the place before closing in. When the cordon around the house was completed, he and Primero went inside. In a moment Teta came out.

"There is no one here now, but Matus has been here," he said.

Chepa and Teta went inside.

"All the food has been taken and everything ransacked. Matus' band was looking for money," said Primero.

Outside, one of the men shouted. Teta, Chepa, and Primero went to the door. Paroy was standing at the curb of the well.

"There is a girl hanging in the well," he called.

Everyone gathered around. A crowbar, a round iron bar with a sharp point on one end, had been thrust through the girl's neck so that the bar extended about equidistant on either side. The bar had been placed so that its ends were resting on the curb of the well, its gruesome burden hanging in the center. The beautiful, fully matured girl was completely naked. Blood, which had run profusely from the two gashes made by the crowbar, was clotted, though not entirely dry. The water in the well was red, indicating much bleeding after the girl was swung inside the well curb. Her hair, in two raven plaits, was disarranged, evidencing a struggle; her body swung slowly and almost imperceptibly back and forth, like a pendulum.

"What could have prompted Matus to do this?" asked Teta.

Chepa said nothing.

"Primero, you and Anselmo lift her out, remove the bar, and place her body in the house. Otero, take some men

and slaughter one of the cows; take enough meat to last us two days. Anastacio, make a wide circle around the place and find which way Matus went when he left here," said Teta.

"Shall I shoot the cow?" asked Otero.

"Yes, it will be quicker. We want to leave here as soon as we can."

Chepa walked away, making a close inspection of the entire area around the well, the corrals, the house, and the *ramadas*.

"What are you looking for?" asked Teta when she had finished her search.

"To see if anyone else was here when Matus arrived."

"What do you think?"

"There was no one. The girl was alone."

"What do you make of it?"

"Her husband, her father, or whoever she lived with was away. It is not likely she would be left here alone at night, so a man may come riding in at any time."

"We will keep a lookout," said Teta.

Anastacio returned and reported that Matus' band had gone toward the east.

"We will go north."

"If we followed him, we would find only dead and tortured Mexicans," said Anastacio.

Teta said to Chepa, "Matus has only eight men with him. Do you think that is all he brought?"

"No, there are other groups going to other places. They will all reassemble at some previously selected point this side the line of Mexican forts. They will want their full strength while going in," said Chepa.

"It might be a good thing for us to divide into three or four groups," said Teta.

"No, we should stay together. Most of the men who came to the mountains with you are not acquainted with this country. I think we should go north to one of the big American-owned ranches. There we will find many horses, much corn, beans, and coffee. Also, there will be many *vaqueros*, and we will need all our men."

"How many *vaqueros*?" asked Teta.

"From ten to fifteen."

"Do you call that many when there are thirty of us?" asked Teta.

"The *vaqueros* are all armed, and they are good fighters. Man for man, they are as good as the Yaquis. We must not underestimate them. Besides, the odds in our favor will not be so great as they were for you at the train because they may see us before we see them."

Teta looked at her quickly. He did not know how she meant the reference to the train, but he let it pass.

Primero and Anselmo came from the house.

"Did you search further in the house?" asked Teta.

"Yes. There was nothing of value. Matus did a thorough job."

"Have you thought what effect Matus' raid will have on us?" asked Chepa.

"Yes. It will double the possibility that the Mexican Army will be informed and will be waiting for us."

"It depends," said Chepa.

"Upon what?"

"When Matus gets back, when we get back, and whether or not the Army thinks there is one band or two bands raiding, or whether the Army learns anything about either raid."

"Matus never leaves anyone alive to warn the Army," said Anselmo.

"Not that he knows about," agreed Chepa, "but it is always possible that someone will see him without his knowing it."

"It is true," said Primero.

"Teta, if the man who lives here does not come in before we leave, he may come soon afterward; when he sees what has happened, he will ride with much speed to spread the news and get help," said Chepa.

"We will leave someone to take care of him and get his horse."

"There may be more than one," said Chepa.

"Then we will leave five men. They can overtake us in the morning."

"That will be enough," said Chepa.

"Primero, will you, Anselmo, Manuel, Anastacio, and Paroy stay and attend to the *ranchero*. If he is not here by daylight in the morning, overtake us as quickly as you can."

The sun was low in the west when Otero reported that the meat was ready.

"Give some to Primero and we will be off," said Teta.

The band kept going north until dark, when camp was made in an open space surrounded by a thicket.

Small fires were built for roasting the meat, and sentries were posted.

The next morning Teta announced that they would not depart until Primero's party caught up. While they were waiting, Antonio, one of the sentries, ran into camp.

"There is a road north of here which runs east and west. Just now I saw a *vaquero* come over a hill some distance to the east."

Chepa picked up her rifle and started toward the road.

"Wait a moment, Chepa. Let us capture this fellow. He

can give us information which may save much time for us."

Chepa stopped. "That is true," she said.

Teta took the men to the road and hid them in the brush on either side. When the *vaquero* rode into the trap, Teta stepped out into the road and covered the Mexican with his pistol. At the same instant the other men came from their hiding places and surrounded him. The *vaquero* made a slight motion toward his rifle which was in a scabbard tied to his saddle, then raised his hands.

"Get down," said Teta.

The *vaquero* dismounted.

"Manuel, take the horse."

To the *vaquero* he said, "If you cooperate with us, you will not be hurt. You may put your hands down and come with us."

Teta led the way back to the camp.

"Do you know of a ranch to the north which is owned by an American?"

"Yes."

"How far is it?"

"Three hours."

"Is it the largest ranch in this region?"

"Yes."

"How many *vaqueros*?"

"Twelve, usually."

"How is the American called?"

"Slaughter. He is from Texas."

"Does he have a family?"

"Only a wife."

"How many horses does Señor Slaughter have?"

"More than a hundred."

"Will the horses be near the ranch house?"



"*Quién sabe?*" he shrugged, "It is a very big ranch."

"We want you to guide us to the ranch. If we are not there in three hours, it will be very bad for you."

"We will be there," said the vaquero.

Primero and his party came into the camp leading two horses, one with a stock saddle and the other with a pack-saddle. The one with the packsaddle had a full gunny sack tied securely to either side.

"What happened?" asked Teta.

"The *ranchero* came home just before dark, leading this pack horse," said Primero.

"You finished with him at once?" asked Teta.

"Yes. He never knew about the girl."

"What does the pack horse carry?" asked Teta.

"Cornmeal on one side; frijoles and coffee on the other."

"Good. Now we will start for the ranch of the American," said Teta. Turning to the vaquero, he added, "We want to go in such a way as not to pass a house or see a person. If we are seen, it will be bad for you."

"It will take a half-hour longer to go around a *ranchito* on the way," said the vaquero.

"Very well, let us start."

## CHAPTER 20

"THERE is the Slaughter Ranch," said the vaquero, pointing down into a valley to the north.

Teta stopped the band in order to study the layout. A long adobe house, with a deep portal across the front, faced south. To the left of the house was a windmill with an elevated water tank. West of the windmill was a large corral with sides higher than a man, made of heavy, horizontal mesquite poles. Near the corral and north of the windmill was a large adobe building with a sheet-iron roof. North of the house were fifteen or twenty small, one- and two-room adobe buildings. The entire area was bare of vegetation except for a few large cottonwood trees. Some Mexican women were washing clothes under a *ramada* between the large house and the small houses. Except for a number of children, no one else was in sight. The corrals were empty, and no horse could be seen anywhere.

"What do you make of it?" Teta asked the vaquero.

"The vaqueros are away somewhere on the range. The *patrón* is probably with them."

"Who would be in the big house?"

"The *señora* and a *moza* or two. It could be the *señor* and the *señora* are gone to Hermosillo."

"Where are the horses?"

"The horse pasture is there, north of the corral. The horses may be down the valley or over the ridge to the north."

Teta turned to the men. "Primero, take half the men and circle to the right. Otero, take the others and circle to the left. Round up every person and herd them into the corral. Do not shoot anyone unless it is necessary, but do not let anyone get away. Chepa, you guard this vaquero. If he tries to escape or make a signal, shoot him."

The men strung out to either side, taking advantage of the terrain and the scrubby growth to encircle the ranch buildings. When they came into the open, the women at the *ramada* ran toward the little houses, collecting the children as they went.

Teta and Chepa, walking behind the vaquero, went directly to the big house. Chepa stopped the vaquero on the portal, and Teta went inside, his pistol ready. No one was in the large living room. Doors leading to rooms both at the right and at the left were open. Teta was hesitating, undecided which way he would go, when a woman's voice came from the room on the right.

"Who is it?"

He went to the door and saw an attractive woman, with blonde hair and blue eyes, sitting at a dressing table. She looked at him in startled surprise.

"Do you speak Spanish?" he asked.

"A little," she said without rising.

"You are the *Señora Slaughter*?"

"Yes."

"Where is your husband?"

"On the range with the vaqueros. Who are you?"

"I am the leader of a Yaqui band from the mountains. We have come for horses. Your place is surrounded, and you are our prisoner. If your husband is reasonable, you will not be harmed. If he is not, we will take you with us. When do you expect him back?"

She looked at him steadily. If she was afraid, she gave no outward evidence of it.

"He should be here in an hour or two."

"Who else is in the house?"

"My maid is in the kitchen."

"Come with me," he said.

She rose and walked without haste to the door.

"Call your maid," he said.

When the maid, a fat middle-aged woman, came into the living room, Teta said, "Both of you go out onto the portal."

When Mrs. Slaughter saw Chepa guarding the vaquero, she stopped and looked at them. Her eyes went first to the vaquero, whom she knew she had seen at the ranch, and then to Chepa. She saw the stern expression on Chepa's face and felt the deadly purpose behind it.

"We will go to the corral," said Teta.

Mrs. Slaughter did not move at once.

"*Señora*, you had better do as he says," said the vaquero, his tone showing anxiety and concern.

Mrs. Slaughter, followed by her maid, walked down the portal to the west end, and on toward the corral. The heat of midday reminded her that she had left the house with-

out anything on her head, and the glare hurt her eyes. The other people of the ranch, fifteen women, two old men, and thirty or forty children, were already in the corral. Most of the women and children were badly scared, some of them whimpered hysterically. The old men, retired vaqueros, had faced danger many times and now maintained a stoical indifference, but they well knew the peril of being surrounded by a band of mountain Yaquis. They expected that at any moment a massacre would begin in the corral.

Teta told Primero to see that no one escaped, and asked Chepa to go with him to explore the premises. They went first to the adobe building with the sheet-iron roof. It was a combination barn and shop. The end nearest the corral had a number of saddles, saddle blankets, bridles, ropes, branding irons, tools, instruments and medicines for working cattle. The east end of the building was a shop, with forge, anvil, a variety of shop tools, and several kegs of horseshoes. The thick walls had no windows, the only openings being the wide doors at either end.

"This will be a better place to hold the prisoners," said Teta.

"Teta, what is your plan?"

"To hold all these people, especially the *señora*, as hostages. When the *señor* and his vaqueros return, we will propose to give back the women and children in return for a certain number of horses."

"You are the leader, Teta, but I would do it another way."

"What is your plan?"

"I would get all the people in here and guard them closely. Then I would set an ambush for the *señor* and the vaqueros. The ones we failed to get on the first volley we

would get on the second. Then I would take the horses and load them with the stores which are bound to be on a ranch like this. In that way we would not leave any effective fighters behind us to organize the neighboring *rancheros* and vaqueros to follow us."

"Your plan is good strategy," said Teta, "but mine will be more effective. I hope to get many horses instead of a dozen or fourteen."

"As you say," said Chepa.

They went back to the corral, and Teta told Primero to herd all the prisoners into the barn and place five men at each door. When it was done, Teta said to Primero, "The *señor* and the vaqueros will no doubt ride up to the gate on the other side. Place the remaining men inside the corral, on either side of the gate, so they can cover them. As they ride up, I will step into the gate and stop them for a talk."

The men stationed themselves as directed.

"Each of you find a crack you can aim and shoot through. You are not to shoot unless they start a fight. In that case, aim at the vaquero nearest you."

After a time a cloud of dust was seen approaching from up the valley to the west. When the group came in sight, the *señor* was riding ahead. He was dressed in the American fashion, while the vaqueros were typical Mexican cowboys of northern Mexico. The glaring heat of the day, plus the fatigue of long hours in the saddle, had dulled the usually keen senses of the men. They rode to the gate of the corral without suspecting anything amiss.

They were startled to see Teta step into the open gate and raise his left hand. His pistol was in its holster, but he made no move toward it. Mr. Slaughter pulled his horse to a sudden stop.

"Señor, you and your men are covered by twenty rifles. Do not make a move."

Teta made a slight nod to either side with his head. Slaughter glanced at the corral and saw the rifle barrels aimed at him and his men.

"Do you speak Spanish?"

"Yes," Slaughter answered.

To his vaqueros, the Texan said, "Be careful and do not move."

Teta continued, "We have the *señora* and all the people of the ranch prisoners in the barn."

Slaughter and his men, sitting on their horses, could see across the corral fence and through the two great doors of the barn, and it was apparent that what Teta said was true.

"If a single shot is fired, those men have orders to shoot, and the *señora* will be first."

Teta waited for the men on horseback to get the full significance of the situation, and he watched them closely.

"Señor, I understand you have over a hundred horses."

Slaughter looked at him blankly for a moment.

"We need a hundred horses, that is the ransom for your women and children."

"I may have that many horses, but it would take days to find them. Most of them are on the range." His voice indicated he understood the gravity of the situation.

"How many horses do you have in that horse pasture there?" Teta nodded toward the north.

"Perhaps twenty-five or thirty."

"What do you have in your storeroom?"

"Some work clothing, cornmeal, flour, frijoles, and coffee."

"Señor, I will make a trade with you."

"What are your terms?"

"First, each of you will drop your guns to the ground where you are. You will send your vaqueros to bring in every horse in the pasture. One of my men will go with them on your horse to see that all the horses are brought in. How large is that pasture?"

"Two thousand acres."

"We will allow one hour for them to be back with all the horses; every man must return with them. You will stay here and go to your storehouse with four of my men. We want thirty-five pairs of trousers and the same number of shirts."

"I only have twenty-four pairs of trousers and the same number of shirts."

"All you have, then. Also a thousand kilos of meal and flour, a hundred kilos of frijoles, and a hundred kilos of coffee. We will take your guns, all your horses, saddles, and bridles, the clothes, the food, and give you back your women and children unharmed."

"I have no choice but to agree," said Slaughter.

"There is one other condition," said Teta.

"When your men return with the horses, they must submit to being guarded by my men until we are ready to leave."

Slaughter asked the vaqueros if they would agree. The men looked toward their wives and children, then nodded.

"Leave your guns in your scabbards, drop them to the ground, and make sure they do not go off," said Teta.

Most of the men had rifles in scabbards attached to their saddles. A few had pistols in scabbards fastened to their belts. They eased all the guns to the ground.



"Otero," called Teta, "take the *señor's* horse, go with the men, make sure every horse is brought in and that every man returns."

The men rode away to the horse pasture, leaving Slaughter standing on the ground in front of the gate.

"Primero, have the guns stacked against the fence until we are ready to leave."

At midafternoon all thirty-two of the Yaqui band, mounted and leading twelve pack horses, rode out of the valley toward the south. Not a shot had been fired. The guards had left the women, children, and old men in the barn, and the *patrón* and the vaqueros standing some distance west of the corral, without guns and without horses.

Slaughter and the vaqueros watched the dust of the *remuda* go over the ridge to the south.

"Thank God, we lost only the horses and some provisions," said Slaughter, "unless something happened before we got here," he added.

He ran across the corral toward the barn with short stilted steps occasioned by his flapping chaps and high boot heels. The gate from the corral to the barn was open, and the women from the barn were rushing about looking for their men. Slaughter did not see his wife among them and kept going to the barn. He slowed down to a walk when he glimpsed his wife kneeling beside her maid, fanning her with a piece of cardboard. Mrs. Slaughter saw him coming, got up, started toward him, and all but collapsed in his arms.

"Bob, are you all right?"

"Yes, and you?"

"Not hurt, only scared to death."

"What happened to Josefa?"

"She fainted when Marcelo told us it was Chepa's band."

"Chepa?"

"She was here! It was she who marched me, Josefa, and Marcelo to the barn."

"My God!"

"The Yaquis captured Marcelo early this morning, and he heard them talking as they came along."

Marcelo had returned with water, and Josefa was recovering.

"We are lucky that losing some horses and having Josefa in a faint are our only casualties. I must see what can be done about reporting the raid to the Army."

He went back to the corral, where he found the *segundo*.

"Leandro, where are our nearest horses?"

"There may be some down the valley to the east. Last night the old gray mare, the colt, and three or four other horses came in to water."

"Send all the men in that direction to bring them in."

"They will have to go on foot."

"That is the reason for sending all the men. Have them hurry. If we can report the raid quickly enough, we may get some of our horses back."

In an hour the men had five horses in the corral. Slaughter came from the storehouse with two new bridles.

"These are all we have left, and they were covered so that the Yaquis did not see them. Send one of the men to Mazatan. If the telephone is working, have him call the General in Hermosillo and report the raid and the loss of forty-one horses. You yourself go to La Colorada. If the

telephone is out of order there, ride on to Torres, which is on the railroad, and send a telegram. Tell the General the Yaquis left here about three in the afternoon, headed south toward the Bacatete Mountains. You will have to ride bareback. Maybe you can borrow a saddle at a ranch on the way."

## CHAPTER 21

THE sun beat down with relentless intensity on the houses, the streets, and the parade ground of the *cuartel* at Esperanza. Dogs panted in the shade, horses drooped their heads in corrals, the sentry mopped sweat from his face. Heat rays hit the ground, bounced against the thick walls of the General's office and back to the ground again.

The telephone rang, and an orderly answered it.

"It was the operator at the depot. A telegram for you has come from Ortiz. Shall I go for it?" he asked General Peña.

"Yes."

The orderly returned shortly with the telegram and handed it to the General, who read it aloud."

LA MISA

BY COURIER TO ORTIZ

YAQUI RAIDS AND DEPREDACTIONS REPORTED FROM NORIA, TECORIPA, AND BARRANCA. THOUGHT TO BE BAND OF JESÚS MATUS. AM LEAVING WITH 100 MOUNTED TROOPS. WILL GET 50 MORE AT PUNTA DE AGUA.

FRANCISCO RAMOS, COLONEL

TO THE COMMANDER OF THE YAQUIS ZONE

General Peña went to a wall map and looked for the Rancho Noria and the Rancho Barranca. He knew where Tecoripa was. He wondered whether the raids had occurred in the order named in the telegram. If so, Jesús Matus had probably gone out of the mountains near Punta de Agua or Arenas and was making a wide circle toward the east; Colonel Ramos would be trailing him. On the other hand, if the raids had occurred in the reverse order, Ramos might intercept him. The General reread the telegram to see if he had overlooked something that would indicate the direction. There was nothing. "Ramos' information was probably as meager as that he sent me," he thought.

"I need to alert all the garrisons and get other forces out to cut off the return of the raiders. I must attempt to anticipate Matus, but first I need more information," the General said to himself.

It occurred to him that General Tierra, at Hermosillo, should be sent the substance of Colonel Ramos' telegram. He wrote a message and sent it to the operator at the railroad station. Meanwhile he tapped on his desk with nervous fingers, walked the floor, studied the map, and ran his fingers through his heavy black hair.

When the orderly returned, he brought another telegram.

#### BUENA VISTA

WORD HAS COME FROM CUMURIPA OF YAQUI RAIDS ON RANCHO POTRERO AND RANCHO CIENEGUITA. NO ONE LEFT ALIVE AT EITHER PLACE.

L. GARCIA, CHIEF OF POLICE  
TO GENERAL PEÑA, ESPERANZA

The second telegram indicated the scope of Matus' activity, but not his direction of travel. Neither telegram gave the time of the raids. He went to the map, checked distances, and worked out a plan. If Matus was swinging in a clockwise direction, he would intend to enter the mountains by the Pass of San José, the Pass of Bacatete, or the Pass of the Bishop, and Colonel Ramos would probably be trailing him.

The General could have an infantry force from Arenas occupy the Pass of San José, and another from the Fort of Bacatete move east and take a strong position in the Pass of Bacatete between the Hill of the Rooster and the Mesa de Chichibobuaje. An infantry force from Torocobampo could take a position in the Pass of the Bishop. He could send a combined cavalry force from Esperanza and Torim. The two groups could unite at San Juanico and move north under Colonel Borrego. If this column should have the good fortune to fall in behind Matus from the southeast, with Colonel Ramos trailing him from the northeast, they could trap him in whichever pass he tried to go through to enter the mountains.

"This is a very good plan," he thought, "provided Matus is going in a clockwise circuit, and provided he heads for one of the four central passes, and provided he does not get there before we can maneuver. The chance that the plan will work is about one out of twenty," he concluded.

"On the other hand," he thought, "Matus may head for the Pass of the Burros, or he might make a great sweep to the south and enter the mountains by the Road of the Coyotes, or even circle the southeast corner of the mountains."

The General considered all the possibilities and weighed them each against the other. The odds were still

in favor of the Pass of San José, the Pass of Bacatete, or the Pass of the Bishop.

Of one thing he was sure, it would be better to try to anticipate Matus and prepare a trap for him than to send expeditions off in all directions. Such strategy might give the wily Yaqui the opportunity he needed to evade a field column and get back into the mountains.

General Peña made his decision. With a pencil he wrote the general order for a campaign which, if successful, would assure his military reputation and bring promotion.

#### Esperanza

To the Garrison Commanders of the Yaqui Zone:

A Yaqui band, presumably that of Jesús Matus, is raiding and killing in the region northeast of the Bacatete Mountains. At last report, he was east of Suaqui. Colonel Ramos, with 150 mounted troops, is on his trail. It is assumed Matus will attempt to enter the Bacatete Mountains somewhere between the Pass of San José and the Pass of the Bishop. Our plan is to surround him at his point of entrance. The following orders will be carried out at once:

1. The Commandant at Arenas will send 100 infantry to take a strong position in the Pass of San José.
2. The Commandant at Bacatete will send 100 infantry to take a position in the Pass of Bacatete.
3. The Commandant at Tetacombiate will send 100 infantry to occupy the gap between the Hill of the Rooster and Zamahaca.
4. The Commandant at Torocobampo will send 100 infantry to take a position in the Pass of the Bishop.

5. Colonel Borrego will move northeast with 100 cavalry from Torim. At San Juanico he will meet Captain Angel with 50 cavalry from Esperanza. With the combined force, Colonel Borrego will move north with the view of falling in behind Matus and penning him against the east escarpment of the mountains.

6. The Commandants at San Juanico, Coyote, Torocobampo, Agua Caliente, Pitayita, and Arenas, will hold their cavalry units in readiness to assist Colonel Ramos and Colonel Borrego by falling in behind Matus and forcing battle at whatever point he attempts to enter the mountains.

All men will carry food for five days.

Peña, Chief of the Yaqui Zone

General Peña gave the paper to an orderly with instructions to make twelve copies of it on the ancient typewriter; this the orderly did.

The General sent for Captain Angel. While he waited, he tried to contact Torim by telephone. Turning the crank on the box vigorously, one long and two shorts, he took the receiver down and shouted, "Bueno, Torim." After a dozen such attempts Torim answered. The line sputtered and crackled, but finally he got Colonel Borrego to the telephone and tried to explain about Matus and his raids, but Colonel Borrego would only shout back, "Qué?"

The General abandoned trying to explain about Matus and told Borrego to take one hundred cavalry, go to San Juanico, and wait for Captain Angel. After many repetitions Borrego said he understood, but General Peña made him repeat the order to make sure.

In the meantime Captain Angel had arrived. The General handed him a copy of the order the typist had fin-

ished. When the Captain had read it through, the General said, "Captain, send a courier at once, with six copies of the order, to San Juanico with instructions for each post commandant to forward copies on to Coyote, Torocobampo, Agua Caliente, Pitayita, and Arenas. You will then take fifty mounted men, go to San Juanico, and wait for Colonel Borrego."

General Peña then sent a copy of the order to the railroad station to be transmitted by telegraph to the commandant at Peon, who would send copies by courier to the commandants at Tetacombiate and Bacatete.

When the orders were all dispatched, the General sat at his desk and said to himself, "It would be like Matus to swing far to the north and enter at Punta de Agua, or to come south and pass between here and San Juanico at night to enter at Chinipove or Pozo Verde."

The next morning General Peña received another telegram.

#### HERMOSILLO

YAQUIS TOOK FORTY-ONE HORSES FROM SLAUGHTER RANCH NEAR MAZATAN YESTERDAY. RECOVER HORSES IF POSSIBLE.

TIERRA,

TO THE CHIEF OF YAQUI ZONE, ESPERANZA

General Peña looked at Mazatan on the map, walked the floor, and went back to the map. "That means Matus did go north and will return to the mountains by Punta de Agua," he thought. "He is probably halfway to Punta de Agua already, and will pass there long before I can countermand the general order and shift the forces to the north. The only hope is that Ramos may cut him off and force him south through the Valley of Agua Caliente."

## CHAPTER 22

AFTER leaving the Slaughter Ranch, Teta and Chepa's band took a course slightly east of south in order to bypass Rancho Casita. Before sunset they came to a windmill where they watered the horses, filled their gourd canteens, and went on again.

When dark came, Teta said, "Chepa, do you think we should stop to eat and rest?"

"Yes, it will be safe, and we can make better time during the day."

They ate the meat they had cooked the night before, and Teta told the men they would divide the night into three watches.

"It is necessary that we graze the horses. Each man, while on watch, can look after four of them."

The men were tired and were soon asleep. Teta and Chepa went a little distance from the others. When they found a suitable place to sleep, Teta said, "What route shall we take tomorrow?"

"A dry stream, which runs south, enters the Rio Yaqui



at Cumuripa. There are twelve or fourteen ranches down its valley. I think we should keep to the ridges along the west side of the valley until we get almost to Cumuripa, then turn west to the Hill of the Three Brothers, which is three or four miles northeast of the Fort of Agua Caliente. The day after tomorrow night, we can cross the Valley of Agua Caliente to the Pass of San José."

"Where will we get tomorrow?"

"Perhaps to the Rancho Cendradito. The land ahead is rough, and we will wind back and forth a great deal, as we did today."

"You look tired."

"I am more sleepy than tired."

"You should sleep."

She laid her head on his shoulder. After he thought she was asleep, she said, "Teta?"

"What is it, *insewa*?"

"Your plan today was good."

"Fortune was with us. Another time it might have gone wrong. Suppose the vaqueros, when they went after the horses, had kept going to the next ranch for assistance? It would not have helped us to kill the hostages; we would still have been there afoot."

"You never can tell how a plan will work out," said Chepa.

"It will be good to get back to our camp in the mountains. We have enough food for months. You can eat horse meat to make little José Gloria big and strong."

She did not answer, and her gentle breathing told Teta she was asleep.

In the late afternoon of the next day they rode onto a ridge overlooking the Rancho Cendradito. Teta halted

the group in the brush while he and Chepa went on to a point where they could see the *rancho* through the field glasses. Teta looked, then gave the glasses to Chepa.

"There is no sign of life there. It may be that Matus has visited this *rancho*, too," she said.

"Shall we go see?"

"No. I know where there is a water hole two or three miles to the southwest. Let us go there."

"It is well."

They went on to the place and watered the horses. It was not yet sundown, but Chepa said, "Tomorrow will be an easy journey. We will have to wait at the Hill of the Three Brothers until it is dark before crossing the Valley of Agua Caliente. It will be well to camp here tonight; we can water the horses again before we leave in the morning."

"Good," said Teta. "Over there is a cow. We can have fresh meat."

"Do not shoot her. Someone might hear the report of the rifle."

"We will have Otero rope her."

Several of the men went around the cow and herded her while Otero made a throw with a lariat. On the second try, he caught her. Two other of the men, who knew how to work cattle, dismounted and threw the cow to the ground while a third cut her throat. Most of the meat was roasted over a number of fires, with each person holding chunks of meat on sticks over the coals.

When they had eaten and the watches were arranged, Teta took Chepa to a jungle thicket he had found. An open space, clean, level, a dozen steps across, was almost surrounded by an impenetrable thicket of *san juanico*, mesquite, and blooming *guayacán* bushes, interlaced with

*pitaya* and *cholla*. On the west side of the thicket was a giant saguaro, and on the south a large *palo verde* tree.

"It is a beautiful place," said Chepa as Teta spread his blanket on the ground under the tree.

"Are you tired tonight, *insewa*?"

"No."

"You do not want to sleep?" asked Teta.

"Not nearly so much as I want you."

She hung her clothes on the branches of the *palo verde*, luxuriating in the fragrant breeze which carried away the last trace of the day's heat. Then she sat looking at the dancing shadows made by the moonlight shining through the slender leaves of the *palo verde* tree. Teta could sense her mounting desire as she turned to look into his eyes.

The forces of the desert receded into the background then, and the moonlight, the sounds, the beauty of their surroundings faded into complete oblivion.

Awareness returned, first as in a mist, afar off, then slowly merged into reality. Chepa looked up; the moon, lower in the west, was still shining through the delicate branches of the *palo verde*. Moon and shadows then faded as she drifted into deep, tranquil sleep.

Awaking, Teta knew that day was near although the first light of dawn was not yet visible in the east. He could hear the horses, a long way off, walking and chewing, in the early-morning stillness of the desert. The moon had long since gone down, and the stars were vividly luminous. As he watched them, the paler ones gradually faded. Movement began in the camp, a cough, footsteps, monosyllables. The larger stars began to pale, and still Teta did not move, for Chepa's head was on his shoulder. The camp was awake now, men were talking and eating; the horses

were brought in. The rolling layer of clouds in the east slowly turned to a golden rose.

He lightly touched Chepa's blue-black braids, and his fingers followed the outline of her strong young face, reaching the point of her chin. "Open your eyes, *insewa*, another day is here."

Soon after sunrise the band set off toward the south and the Hill of the Three Brothers.

As Teta and Chepa's band rode away from the camp, the column of soldiers led by Colonel Ramos was preparing to leave the Rancho Cendradito, less than five miles away. They had come to the *rancho* from the east a short time after Teta and Chepa had looked at the place through the field glasses late the afternoon before. Colonel Ramos had been as far east as the Rio Yaqui. At the Ranchos Barranca and Potrero he had found mute evidence of Jesús Matus' visit, but had trouble in picking up Matus' tracks. The murderous Yaqui raiders were mounted now and were leaving a scattered trail leading west. The Colonel was convinced that Matus' band was divided and that only a part of it had swung that far east; now he was moving west, trying to pick up the trail of the reassembled group. He stopped abruptly when, at the top of a ridge west of Rancho Cendradito, he came to a trail left by many horses.

"Captain Facundo, what do you make of this?" he asked.

The Captain dismounted and carefully studied the horse tracks, noting that nocturnal insects had crawled across them.

"There are between forty and fifty horses, and the tracks were probably made yesterday."

"Matus must have gotten his band together and is going in," observed the Colonel.

"If he camped for the night, he may not be far ahead," said the Captain.

"We will follow the trail," said the Colonel.

In a short time the column reached the water hole and found the campsite. They discovered where a cow had been killed and the meat cooked over the fires.

"They have not been gone long," said the Colonel, who had been examining the freshness of the *huarache* tracks.

"We will continue at a trot."

It was midday when Otero, who was riding at the rear of the party, put his horse at a gallop and overtook Teta.

"There is a cloud of dust on our trail, about two miles back."

Teta said to Chepa, "Give me the field glasses, I will drop back and see who it is. It may be Matus. The rest of you keep moving ahead."

He stopped on a high point and waited. In a few moments he saw the first riders of a Mexican column appear over a ridge a mile and a half away. With the field glasses he could see several of the lead horsemen; farther back, dust obscured the remainder. He waited until the rear of the column topped the ridge, made a swift calculation as to the number, then set off at a gallop to overtake his band.

As he came abreast of Chepa, he said, "It is a Mexican column of between a hundred forty and a hundred sixty mounted troops. They are definitely after us and are coming at a trot."

"That is too many for us to fight, and they are too close for us to prepare an ambush," said Chepa.

"Shall we swing to the east and try to get to the Sierra Madre?" asked Teta.

"No. They would overtake us at the river. There is but one thing for us to do now, and that is to make for the Pass of San José. This column is behind us and we can keep ahead of it. If the garrisons at Agua Caliente and Pitayita have not been alerted, we can dash by before they can round up and saddle their horses."

"How far is the Hill of the Three Brothers?"

"Three miles."

"Let us go at a trot and keep our distance ahead of the column," said Teta.

"That will save the horses for the dash by the forts," said Chepa.

The band increased its speed, and Teta kept a constant check on the distance between it and the column behind.

"We are holding our lead," he told Chepa.

"Their horses are more spent than ours; they have probably been riding fast all morning," said Chepa.

"Our worry is in front of us rather than behind us," said Teta.

"There are the Three Brothers," said Chepa, pointing to three rounded knobs ahead. "We will go over the pass between the middle one and the one on the right."

When they reached the pass without decreasing speed, Chepa said, "There is Pitayita to the northwest, and over here, to the southwest, is the Fort of Agua Caliente. We will go through about midway between."

A half-hour later, when they were directly between the two forts, a cloud of dust moved off from Pitayita. In a few moments it was obvious that soldiers were moving to intercept them before they could reach the Pass of San José. Each man of the band knew what the cloud of dust



meant, and each one soon saw that they would be cut off before they could reach the pass.

"What do you think?" asked Teta.

"It is the cavalry troop from Pitayita," said Chepa.

"How many men?" Teta asked.

"Perhaps fifty. That is usually the number they keep there."

"Shall we prepare to fight them?"

"No. It would delay us until the column behind caught up."

"Then we had better change our direction and head for the Pass of Bacatete."

"It is best," said Chepa.

When they turned southwest, directly toward the Hill of the Rooster, it placed the Pitayita cavalry unit as far behind as the other column. However, the horses from Pitayita were fresher, and the unit continued to gain slightly.

Glancing back toward the left, Teta saw another cloud of dust; this one was setting out from the Fort of Agua Caliente.

"A third troop is after us now," he said, pointing to the new dust cloud.

"This is bad," said Chepa. "They were looking for us."

Intently Teta watched the speed and the angle at which the Agua Caliente troop approached.

"We will outrun them," he said, "provided our horses hold out." He set a faster pace.

Now the horses were breathing hard and were in a lather.

"The animals cannot stand much more," said Chepa, "but we cannot slow down."

As they approached the mouth of the narrow valley be-

tween the Hill of the Rooster and the Mesa de Chichibobuaje, the Yaquis began to feel that they had won the race. At the entrance Teta and Chepa pulled aside and motioned for the band to continue at full speed. Manuel and several others of Chepa's old band were in the lead.

A moment later a volley of gunfire sounded ahead of them. Teta turned in time to see Manuel and another of Chepa's old band fall from their horses. The others quickly turned and started back.

Teta threw up his hand and shouted for the band to turn back.

"It is an ambush," he yelled as he motioned Chepa to follow him.

He turned right and went south across the flaring base of the Hill of the Rooster. The ground was rising rapidly, and Teta could now see the dust of the three pursuing units clearly. The one from Agua Caliente was nearest. Its commander had seen the Yaqui band change direction and had altered his course in an effort to cut the Yaquis off and pen them against the mountains.

Teta and the others were so intent on watching the speed of the Agua Caliente column that they missed seeing a new and very large cloud of dust approaching from Torocobampo to the southwest.

Chepa saw it first.

"Look!" she shouted.

Teta took the situation in at a glance. He watched the dust for a moment, not slacking his speed. The cloud was coming directly toward them. He gauged the distance between his band and the new contingent, and the distance between the contingent and the base of Zamahaca.

"They have seen us; we cannot get by," he shouted.

He looked to the right and saw that they were in front

of the gap between the Hill of the Rooster and Zamahaca.

"There is our only escape," he yelled, turning toward the gap.

The band was now riding away from all four columns.

"If they overlooked placing an ambush here, we will make it," he shouted to Chepa.

A half mile of hard riding, with the horses panting and reeling, brought them to the narrow part of the gap. Teta slowed to see if there was an ambush ahead. A fusillade rang out, and bullets struck all around. One of the pack horses fell. Teta looked quickly at the smoke to judge the size and position of the enemy.

"It is a strong party and well situated," he said. "The commander is nervous. Had he waited a little longer to shoot, he could have done much damage. Now we will have to climb."

He looked toward Zamahaca, noted the location of the troops in the gap, and glanced back at the column coming from the southeast.

"We cannot make Zamahaca," he said.

They turned toward the Hill of the Rooster.

A long, narrow, jagged ridge extended upward from where they were, going northwest to the base of the smaller summit. The crest of the ascending ridge was a narrow, wall-like formation. The talus at the base of the perpendicular crest was steeply sloping, but they might be able to ride their horses almost to the summit. By riding on the west side of the crest, they would be concealed from the four approaching columns. None of the cavalry units would know where the band had gone until they reached the gap between Zamahaca and the Hill of the Rooster. By then the Yaquis could reach the summit and take up a strong position.

Chepa had been following Teta's thoughts. She saw him look again, longingly and searchingly, at Zamahaca.

"If we could go that way, we might escape over the other side into the mountains," he said.

"I know."

"If we go to the Hill of the Rooster, we will find a dead end. There will be no escape unless we get help, lots of help."

"I know," she said.

She looked back at the column from Torocobampo. "They will cut us off. We have no choice."

Shouting for the band to follow, Teta started up the west side of the crest of the ridge, toward the summits of the Hill of the Rooster. Three-quarters of the way up, the talus slope became too steep for the horses to go farther.

Teta shouted back to the men, "Abandon the horses. Bring all your ammunition, all the water, as much food as you can carry, and run!"

Chepa was immediately behind him. She got off her horse with her rifle, cartridge belts, field glasses, gourd canteen, and a chunk of roasted meat. She slipped and slid on the loose, shaley rocks as she came alongside Teta's horse.

Teta had his rifle, two rifle cartridge belts, his pistol in its scabbard with cartridge belt attached, a piece of meat, his canteen, and his blanket. Followed by Chepa, he went on up the talus slope to the near summit of the Hill of the Rooster. The men were strung out, following behind.



## CHAPTER 23

THE top of the Hill was like a saddle, one which had a low horn or pommel, a low seat, and a high cantle or back. The "horn" was astride the narrow ridge the Yaqui band had just come along, and faced southeast. Both the "horn" and the "cantle" were of solid rose-red rock.

Teta and Chepa were breathing hard when they reached the "seat," and while they caught their breath, Teta appraised the salient features of the Hill with a view of defense. When their breathing became easier, Teta said, "Let us go up there," indicating the "horn." The only ascent was up the slope from the "seat" of the saddle. At the tip of the summit was a sheer drop of at least fifty feet. The summit itself was a knoblike formation, thirty to forty feet across. From it they could see across the Valley of Agua Caliente to the east and northeast and to Torocobampo to the southeast. The Forts of Pitayita and Agua Caliente were clearly visible.

Teta gave but a glance at the valley before concentrat-

ing his attention on the location of the four Mexican cavalry units. By this time they had converged at the gap between the Hill of the Rooster and Zamahaca. The units had massed at the place where his band had stopped a short time before. The dust had cleared away, and with the field glasses he could see to estimate the total number of cavalymen.

"There are about four hundred of them," he said.

"How many in the ambush in the gap?" asked Chepa.

"At least a hundred, and if there are as many in the pass between here and the Mesa de Chichibobuaje, we are surrounded by six hundred troops."

"We are not completely surrounded yet, but we will be as soon as the Mexicans get organized," said Chepa.

"Do you think they will attack soon?" asked Teta.

"No, not soon. They know the advantage of our position and what a direct assault will cost them. They will surround the Hill and start a siege, with the idea of wearing us down."

"They are trying to decide what to do now," said Teta.

Chepa looked at the massed troops through the field glasses.

"They have made one decision," she said. "A rider is setting off at a gallop toward Torocobampo, another toward Agua Caliente, and a third through the gap toward the west."

"They are going to spread the news and bring back reinforcements," said Teta.

Chepa turned her attention from the troops to the horses which had been abandoned. Some at the far end had turned around and started back the way they had come. The others still stood, as if leaning against the dyke-like wall.

"Teta, we should kill at least two of the horses for meat. We may be here for days."

"We have no wood for cooking."

"We can cut the meat into thin strips, dry it in the sun, and eat it raw," said Chepa.

"Of course," said Teta. Then he called down to Otero below, "Take several men, go back, kill two of the horses, and bring the meat. If the Mexicans start up the slope, come back and we will keep you covered."

Otero selected ten men and went back along the talus slope.

"Chepa, you watch the Mexicans, and I will see how we can best defend this place."

Teta studied the ledges, the contours, and the approaches to the top of the Hill. On either side of the summit was a ledge. The one on the west side was narrow; the one on the east was much wider. Below the ledge on the west was an almost perpendicular cliff. "There is nothing to worry about on the west," he thought. "The only possible approach to the west side of the summit is from the south, along the talus slope where the horses are."

While he was looking toward the horses, he heard a shot and the horse he had ridden from the Slaughter Ranch fell. The men kept him from rolling down the slope by grabbing his mane and tail. Another shot killed Chepa's horse.

Two men at the head of the ledge and four on top of the summit where he stood could command the only approach to the west side, he concluded. He went down the summit, across the "seat" and climbed the higher summit, which was the "cantle" of the saddle, to the northwest. The ascent was made with great difficulty. He had to use hands as well as feet to scramble up. The top was

rounded, knoblike, but he could get near enough the edge to see that there was no possibility of the Hill's being assaulted from the west or north.

"That is good," he thought. "They can only come at us from one direction, the east. We can concentrate almost our entire force on that side."

He studied the slope of the Hill to the east, calculating how effective riflemen would be on the larger summit, and decided against it. "We had better concentrate our men on the ledge below and on the smaller summit," he thought.

Teta looked across to the lower summit at Chepa, silhouetted against the sky. She stood looking toward the west. A stiff breeze was blowing from that direction, pressing her blouse and skirt against her. For a moment he looked in admiration, completely forgetting the approaching danger. Chepa turned to face the southeast, and Teta focused his attention on the ledges below.

He became aware that he was not the only one working on the strategy of defense. Every man of the band, except those who had gone to butcher the horses, was thinking the matter out for himself. Obviously most of them had concluded that only the east side needed to be defended, for they were all gathering along that ledge.

Teta climbed down and went to where the men were.

"What do you think?" he asked.

"They will have to come from that way," said Primero, indicating the east slope of the Hill.

"The best place for us is along this ledge," said Anastacio.

"We need a rock wall along the edge," said Paroy.

"Now is the time to build it, before the Mexicans take

up a position below and start shooting at us," said Anselmo.

The ledge was a part of the same solid rock which constituted the two summits. There were a few loose stones on the ledge, but not nearly enough to build a wall several feet high. The almost perpendicular cliff below the ledge varied from six to twenty feet in height. Rocks were plentiful on the slope at its base.

Teta said, "A wall along this rim will be a good thing. We can move around and change our positions behind it without having to crawl on our bellies. We had better gather rocks for it from the slope below at once. The area will soon be in the range of their fire. Let us go down to the base of this cliff and form a line; we will pass the rocks from man to man to the place there where the slope is nearest the ledge. The man on the highest point of the slope can toss them to a man on the ledge, who can throw them on a pile. We can build the wall tonight in the moonlight. It will take many rocks, because the wall needs to be at least three hundred feet long."

The men realized how essential the wall would be, and quickly formed a line below the face of the ledge, then passed rocks up to Primero, who stayed on top.

Teta went back up the smaller summit to see what the Mexicans were doing. Chepa was still watching them closely through the field glasses.

"What goes on down there?" he asked.

"Many arguments, and much pointing this way and that. The officers are not of one mind about what should be done next. I think one favors storming the Hill now, without delay. He keeps waving his arms wildly and pointing this way. Another evidently thinks they should

go slowly, surround the Hill, and start a siege. He makes gestures indicating the troops should be deployed around the base of the Hill."

"Their indecision and delay will give us time to build the breastworks."

Chepa handed Teta the field glasses and walked over to the east side of the summit where she could see the men collecting the rocks.

"The wall will be of much value," she said. "And we need a small semicircular one on this summit. Four or five men here could do great damage should the Mexicans come up the crest of the ridge."

Teta realized the value of her suggestion. The top of the summit was rounded, and a man standing on its highest point would present a full target to sharpshooters below.

"Your thought has merit," he said. "We will build a small parapet wall, to give protection from the south and the east, as soon as the men finish collecting rocks."

"Good," said Chepa.

"Do you think they may attack before dark?" Teta asked.

"I thought they would, but they have argued too long," Chepa glanced at the sun, which was about an hour high.

"They might make a charge after dark. There will be moonlight."

"Ah, yes, there will be moonlight. How wonderful it was last night." Her voice was low and musical; all hardness and thought of battle was gone for an instant. He put an arm around her and felt response flash through her like a flame.

"Why does this have to be, *inpale?*" asked Chepa. "Before I met you, I liked nothing better than the prospect of

a fight. Now, something else is much more important."

Chepa looked back toward the Mexicans, and the warmth went out of her eyes. The troops had dismounted, and under the direction of the officers had begun piling rocks for a breastwork around the base of the ridge.

"They have the same idea we have," said Teta. "They are making sure we cannot escape after dark, down the ridge and to Zamahaca. If we could reach Zamahaca, we could get away."

With four hundred cavalymen working, the wall soon began to take form. Rocks were plentiful and close at hand. In a short while the foot soldiers who had been in ambush in the gap came and added their help to the wall building. Before sunset the wall was from two to three feet high and a quarter of a mile in length. It extended in a rounded V shape around the base of the ridge and was high enough for a man to lie prone or kneel behind without exposing himself to fire from above.

"Their plan is becoming evident. They want to keep us from escaping down the ridge, and they will make their assaults up the slope from the east," said Teta.

The infantry troops from the gap took a position behind the wall. The cavalry mounted and began to string out toward the north along the east base of the Hill.

Teta went back down to the ledge where the men were collecting rock. The pile was now of considerable size.

He called to the men, "Come up. We need a small parapet wall up there," pointing to the smaller summit where Chepa still stood.

The men went up and formed another line to the top of the summit. Teta and Primero took the rocks as they were passed to them and made a semicircular wall. By sunset it was completed.

"That is good," said Teta. "Now let us go down and build the wall along the ledge. If it is only a few inches high before the shooting starts, it will help."

When they reached the ledge, Otero and his men had returned with the horse meat.

"Place it over there," said Teta, pointing to the base of the cliff behind him. "We need every man to build this wall."

He placed a third of the men along the edge to lay the rocks, and the others in a line back of them to pass the rocks from the stockpile.

"Make the wall as near the edge as possible without its sliding off," he said.

By this time the Mexican troops had deployed entirely around the eastern base of the Hill. The line was just out of rifle range from above. The horses had been moved back some distance and placed under the care of herders.

One course of rocks had been laid along the length of the ledge, and it was not yet dark, when Chepa called from the summit, "A man is coming up the slope with a white flag."

The men all stopped work and looked down the slope. A horseman was riding directly up the Hill, holding high a stick to which a white cloth was attached. Already he was within rifle range. Teta glanced up at Chepa. She had her rifle trained on the approaching rider.

"Wait," he shouted up to her. "Let us see what he has to say!"

Chepa lowered her rifle, but the hard look on her face did not change.

The slope became much steeper; the rider's horse was leaning forward and digging his hoofs in. With admiration, the men watched the steady approach of this man

who could now be shot down by any one of their thirty-odd rifles. However, the rifles were standing against the cliff at the base of the ledge, and no one went back to get his gun. The rider was now less than a hundred yards away and had reached a point where the ascent was too steep for the horse to continue.

"*Hola!*" he shouted.

"*Quién es?*" replied Teta.

"Colonel Ramos of the Fifth Cavalry Regiment."

"What do you wish?" asked Teta.

"To offer you an opportunity to surrender."

"On what terms?"

"I will recommend clemency to the General."

"Clemency will mean nothing to the General."

"I believe I can influence him."

"We have trusted promises before and have ended up swinging on a rope, or before a firing squad."

"I would do my best."

"We believe you, Colonel Ramos, but the decision would not be yours."

"I think the President would consent to imprisonment instead of the usual penalty."

Teta turned to the men. "You hear what he says. What is your wish?"

"Do not trust him!" shouted Chepa from above.

The defiant vigor of her voice visibly affected the men.

"I would rather take my chances here than spend even one month in a Mexican jail," said Paroy.

"So had I!" said several others.

"What is the prospect if we stay here?" asked Chino.

"Not good but there is a chance. If we can hold out until the mountain Yaquis have time to assemble, they might be able to clear either the Pass of Bacatete to the



north or the gap to the south, long enough for us to escape."

"We have hope," said Anastacio.

"Tell the Colonel no!" said Primero.

"Is that your decision?" Teta asked.

No objection was made. The conversation had been in a tone too low for Colonel Ramos to hear.

"We will not surrender!" shouted Teta.

"Will you not reconsider?" asked the Colonel.

"No."

"If you do not, it means extermination. It is impossible for you to escape. The Army will bring up all the force necessary to take you."

"Our answer is still no."

"I am truly sorry."

"We believe you, Colonel, but we cannot accept."

The Colonel turned and went slowly down the slope. As he went, his head dropped forward and his shoulders slumped.

Teta turned to the men. "Let us hurry with the wall."

"Do you expect an assault tonight?" asked Primero.

"No. This side of the slope will soon be in the shadow of the moon. They will not make a charge when they cannot see whom they are fighting; they might shoot their own men. But they will soon start shooting at us just to keep us on edge and wear us down; that is why we must hurry with the wall."

Twilight had faded, and the moon was shining when all the rocks in the stockpile had been placed on the wall. It was now about two feet high for its entire length.

"That will do for the time being," said Teta. "We will stop and eat. Later, when the slope is in the shadow, we will get more rocks and make the wall higher."

The men had scarcely begun eating their cold roasted meat when scattered firing broke out below. The range was too great, and the bullets hit on the slope down the ledge. Occasionally one would glance on a rock and ricochet up over the ledge. As they ate, Teta warned them against using much water. "We have enough meat for a long siege, but water is scarce. Use as little as you can."

He took a piece of meat and went up to the summit where Chepa was still on lookout. As they ate, they sat behind the low wall lest a glancing bullet come their way. Every few seconds Chepa would scan the slope to the east and the ridge to the southeast.

"I should have shot the Colonel. This is the second time I could have had him."

"He is one of the few friends the Yaquis have in the Mexican Army."

"But he gave the order for the hanging of our mothers. He is the one I have always wanted most to kill."

"Even then I think he was sympathetic. He was only obeying the orders of General Flores."

"That does not change the fact that he directed the execution. If he had been opposed to the orders, he could have resigned, run away, or joined the Yaquis. His carrying out the orders made him a part of the Army, the Government, the System, which decreed the destruction of the Yaquis."

Chepa's tone was bitter, and Teta knew the futility of continuing the argument.

"Insewa, tomorrow is going to be a long hot day. You should sleep."

The muscles in her neck relaxed and her voice softened. "Can you not sleep with me?"

"Not for a long time yet. As soon as the moon moves

over and the slope below is in shadow, we must get more stones to make the wall higher. Later in the night I will come. You can sleep here beside the wall. We will keep a lookout from below."

"I am sure I cannot sleep without you, but I will try."

He went down to the ledge. The men had finished eating.

Teta said to them, "While we are waiting for the shadow of the moon to lengthen, let us cut the horse meat into thin strips. Tomorrow will be a hot day, and the meat will spoil unless we make it into jerky. We can spread it on the higher summit, the sun and the reflected heat from the rocks will cure it before it can spoil."

Within an hour the men had the meat cut into strips no thicker than a man's thumb and spread on top of the higher summit.

The moon was lower now, and the shadow was extending across the slope. Again the men went below and passed rocks up to the ledge. When the pile was as large as it had been before, they returned to the ledge and started making the wall higher. When the rocks were used up and the wall was nearly waist high, Teta said to Primero, "Do you think it is high enough?"

"It is good. If we make it higher, we will have to broaden it at the base to keep it from falling over."

"The wall is adequate, and it is time for everyone to get some rest," said Chepa, who had come down from the parapet unnoticed.

"Chepa! I thought you were asleep."

"I have been for hours, and now I am going to stand guard while all of you sleep."

"But at least half of us should stand guard," said Teta.

"Not until the moon goes down. Until then I can see

the bottom of the Hill and down the ridge. When the moon sets, I will awaken half of you."

Teta walked to the "seat" of the Hill and looked at the moon. It was about an hour high.

"It is well. Scatter out along the ledge, next to the wall, and sleep with your rifles in your hands. If we have an alarm, you will already be in position. When the moon goes down, Chepa will wake every other man to stand watch for two hours, then we will wake the others for their turn."

"We can use the rest," said Primero.

Chepa had Teta's blanket on one arm. She led him up to the parapet on the summit, spread the blanket behind the wall and said, "You must sleep, too. I will awaken you if I see or hear anything suspicious."

She gently pushed him down on the blanket and he was asleep in an instant. When the shadow of the crest of the Hill lengthened to the Mexican lines, Chepa went down to the ledge and woke Primero.

"We had better wake the first shift," she said. "I am going up to the parapet. When it is time for the second shift, come and wake me."

"Very well," Primero said. He began rousing the men.

Chepa went back to the parapet and lay down beside Teta. She did not sleep soundly, and when Primero came to wake her, she heard him before he got there. The Hill was in complete darkness.

"Is everything all right?" she asked.

"I think so. There has been much commotion and noise at the foot of the Hill ever since the moon went down, but all has been quiet up the slope except for the rifle fire."

"Has the amount of fire increased?" she asked.

"It is about the same."

While they were talking, a bullet whistled overhead, and in a moment another hit the wall of the parapet.

"They have moved in closer," said Chepa. "We had better get everyone on duty."

The sound of the bullets woke Teta. "What is it?" he asked.

"The Mexicans have moved closer. Their bullets are hitting up here now," said Chepa.

"Let us go down."

He led the way. At the wall, Teta crouched down beside one of the men. It was too dark to tell who he was.

"What do you make of it?" asked Teta.

"They have moved up the Hill. We are in their range now." The voice was Anselmo's.

The firing was still sporadic. Between volleys an assorted variety of sounds could be heard.

"I believe they are digging in on the side of the Hill," said Primero.

"Yes, that is it. When day comes, they will be in position to make us keep our heads down," said Teta.

"And they will be within our range, too," Chepa added grimly.

"I do not expect an attack now. The men on the first shift can get some rest," said Teta.

## CHAPTER 24

WHEN daylight came, the Mexicans were partially entrenched across the side of the Hill, about two hundred yards below the ledge. No continuous trench or breastworks extended across the slope, but there were a number of rock embankments of various sizes. Some would give protection for two or three men, others for twenty or thirty. Some were situated so they could be approached from the rear without the troops' being exposed to fire from above; others were not.

All the Yaquis were awake now and anxious to see what the Mexicans had been doing through the dark part of the night. Chepa, with the field glasses, studied every detail of the emplacements below.

"Several of those positions cannot be reinforced or supplied without exposing those who do it," she said. "If we watch closely, we will be able to get some of them."

"We cannot waste a bullet," Teta said to the men. "This

siege will be long. Do not shoot unless you have a Mexican in your sights."

Chepa had rearranged the rocks on top of the wall so that she had an opening just large enough to sight down her rifle barrel. Her concentration on the tiny rock embankments was so intense that she was oblivious to what went on beside her. Suddenly she aimed and fired. This was the first shot fired by the Yaquis. Teta, nearby, turned to see who had fired. Chepa, without looking to either side or changing expression, picked up a sharp piece of stone and made a mark on a rock in the wall.

Word passed from man to man, "She got another Mexican!"

The battle for the defense of the Hill began slowly, deliberately, and with deadly effectiveness. Many minutes might pass without a shot, then a Yaqui would fire, sometimes there would be two or three shots in rapid succession. Occasionally one of the five men in the parapet on the summit would shoot.

Teta moved back and forth behind the men along the wall. Shortly after sunrise he passed Chepa and saw that she had two marks on the rock.

Soon afterward a new body of Mexican infantry arrived from the southeast. Teta studied them through the field glasses and estimated their number to be a hundred and twenty. This company joined the reserves of dismounted cavalry units at the foot of the Hill. Teta had already decided that not more than two hundred men were behind the breastworks.

With daylight the firing from the entrenchments had increased and it became more effective. Bullets were constantly spattering along the top of the wall. One hit the edge of a rock, shattering it to splinters; a small, angular

piece hit Antonio in the neck. The shock caused him to lose his color. Teta examined him. The wound was bleeding very little, but the rock fragment was embedded beneath the skin; he could even determine its shape. Antonio was soon back at his place behind the wall.

At midmorning a contingent of foot soldiers arrived from the north. "They are probably from Arenas," Teta thought; he estimated their number to be eighty.

"That makes a total of about eight hundred," he said, handing the field glasses to Chepa. She took them and looked closely at one of the rock walls. Then she aimed and fired.

"Seven hundred and ninety-nine," she said, making a mark on the rock which served her as a scoreboard.

The man next to her, a member of her old band, fell backward with blood gushing from the top of his head.

Teta crawled to him. "A bad scalp wound," he said, "but it did not break the skull. He will recover, but we need a bandage to press the sides of the cut together."

"Cut a strip from your blanket," said Chepa.

Teta went up to the parapet and got the blanket. He cut a strip, tied it tightly around the man's head, and brought it under his chin. The sun was bright and hot on all parts of the ledge, so Teta had two men carry the wounded man around to the west ledge where there was shade.

Several others got light nicks on head, neck, and shoulders during the forenoon, but none were disabling. Paroy was the first fatality. A direct hit between the eyes killed him instantly. The men carried his body to the ledge on the other side.

At midday they discovered a cloud of dust coming along the road from Torocobampo. So much dust could be

stirred up only by a body of cavalry. Teta knelt beside Chepa and watched the newcomers through the field glasses.

"How many?" asked Chepa.

"About a hundred and forty."

"If they keep coming, other Yaqui bands should be able to capture all the Mexican forts; there will not be any soldiers left to defend them," said Chepa.

The troop had stopped and the dust had cleared away. The horses were dripping with sweat and covered with lather.

"Someone of importance has arrived," said Teta, "the officers are hurrying out to meet him. He is dismounting now, and facing this way. It is General Peña!"

"I suspected they were waiting for something. Otherwise they would have attacked early this morning."

"I think it will not be long."

General Peña lost no time. He studied the Hill with field glasses, officers pointed at this feature and that. The General got on his horse and, accompanied by six other officers, rode around the Hill to the north and into the Pass of Bacatete. They returned, went around the Hill to the south and into the gap, then came for a distance up the ridge, before going back to the place where they had started.

Soon the troops began to form in two lines.

"The General has his attack planned," said Teta. "I think I know what it is. There will be three lines of assault. The men behind the embankments will charge up the Hill first. When they leave the embankments, the second line will move in, and when the second line charges, the third will move in."

At midafternoon the assault began. The men behind the

barricades started up the slope on the run. The second line ran madly for the protection of the rock walls.

The speed of the first line decreased rapidly, due to the steepness of the slope, the stifling heat of the day, and the deadly rain of Yaqui bullets from above. The attacking party took advantage of the unevenness of the ground, a rock, a bush, or anything which gave real or imaginary cover. Halfway up, the forward movement of the line stopped completely. Forty or fifty soldiers lay dead or wounded. The others were flattened behind any eminence that offered whole or partial concealment. Not a person on the ledge had been hit; the Mexican troops, in their hurry and excitement, were shooting wildly and without careful aim.

The second line charged, but it fared little better than the first; however, its forward rank came forty or fifty yards farther up the slope than the first line.

Teta glanced at Chepa during the greatest impact of the charge. She looked happy and completely ruthless as she methodically aimed and fired.

As the onward rush of the second charge was halted, Chepa noticed an officer at the left end of the line. He was waving his pistol and urging his men on. She brought her rifle to bear on him. Before firing, she realized she had seen him before and hesitated an instant to look again. The officer was indifferent to his own danger as he urged the men hunting cover to keep on up the Hill. The black waxed mustache did something to her memory. Then it came to her, Colonel Ramos. Her aim became even more careful. When she fired, the Colonel fell on his face and did not move. Chepa took time to put a mark on the rock with a big X by it.

The second attack ended fifty yards below the foot of



the cliff near the ledge. More than a hundred bodies lay sprawled on the slope of the Hill. Over three hundred troops were on the hillside, prone behind any object that would give a semblance of protection.

The third line did not attack. The General recognized the futility of direct assault. Already half of his striking force was dead, wounded, or pinned down on the side of the Hill. He directed the third line, now behind the embankments, to pour a steady stream of fire at the top of the wall on the ledge. Some of the bullets found the cracks being used as portholes. Chino was shot through the left shoulder. One of the men in Chepa's old band got a bullet through the neck; it cut the spinal cord and killed him instantly. The body was carried away, and Teta examined Chino. His bullet had gone completely through the soft tissues of his shoulder without touching a bone.

"You will be all right," Teta said after staunching the flow of blood. "We will need you if that third line charges."

Chino's face was ashen, but he took his rifle and went back to the wall.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent in trying to flush out the troops pinned down on the hillside. Some of them had found positions from which they could shoot at the ledge from close range. Others were behind cover so meager that a shoulder, an arm, or a leg was exposed, furnishing a target for the Yaquis. Still others had lost their hats in the charge, and the intense heat of the sun threatened them with sunstroke. At one time a party of about twenty dashed from its untenable position and ran wildly down the Hill. Not over half of them reached the embankments.

On the ledge, casualties continued to mount. When

dark came, there were four dead and six badly wounded. A dozen others had minor wounds.

Chepa did not leave her place at the wall all day. She was not conscious of heat, hunger, thirst, nor passage of time. Before dark, Teta came to kneel beside her.

"Are you not tired?" he asked.

"I had not thought of it."

"How many marks do you have?"

"Seventeen for sure. There may have been others."

"How is your ammunition?"

"I have ten cartridges left."

"We could not survive another day like this one."

"The General probably knows that," said Chepa.

"We turned them back twice today."

"The General will think up something else for tomorrow."

"You should go eat and rest," said Teta.

"Not yet. There are many Mexicans hiding on the hillside. They will be trying to get away in the moonlight. I want to shoot two more."

Teta went to see about the wounded. Two were unconscious; the other four were feverish and asking for water. He divided all that was left in his canteen among them.

He remembered that Primero had lost the middle finger of his left hand during the afternoon. The bullet hit the finger between the first and second joints while Primero was taking aim. The severance was as smooth as if it had been chopped with an axe. Primero was scarcely aware of the wound until he saw blood gushing from the tiny arteries. Teta had bound the stub tightly with a strip from the blanket. Now he sought out Primero.

"How is the finger?"

"It gives pain but is of no consequence. Another assault and I would forget it completely."

"Do you believe we could beat off another attack?"

"I think so," said Primero.

"A third of our force is out of the fight. We have six dead, counting the two in the Pass, and six badly wounded."

"I know. Each new attack will be harder to turn back. Teta, what can we do with the dead bodies? Tomorrow will be as hot as today, and some of them are already decomposing."

"It is impossible to bury them," said Teta.

"There is but one way, that is to drop them over the cliff on the other side."

"Let it be done," said Teta.

While Primero was disposing of the bodies, Teta went up to the parapet. Only three men were there now. Of the five who started the battle, one had been killed and one severely wounded.

"How did the battle go here?" asked Teta.

"It was hot," said one of Chepa's men.

"But not nearly so hot as it was with the Mexicans. Up here we always have a breeze; down there it must be unbearable. Yaquis can stand more heat than the Mexicans," said Teta.

"It is true. We have the better location."

"How did it go with you, Joaquin?"

"Very exciting. I have never experienced such a day."

The Mexicans were still firing from the embankments at irregular intervals. The shooting from the ledge was diminishing. Shadows extended far down the hillside, rapidly decreasing the moonlit areas where the Mexicans were still behind cover.

Someone was heard coming up from the ledge.

"It is Chepa," said Joaquin.

Teta turned to look at her. She had instinctively stopped on the west side of the summit, where she would be below the angle of fire from the Mexicans. Pain, like the twist of a knife, went through Teta as he regarded her. Dark smudges outlined her eyes. The powder stains which covered her face were streaked where sweat had run down her cheeks. A slump of despair bowed her shoulders. Only the way her hands clinched her rifle and the fanatical gleam in her eyes gave a hint of the indomitable Chepa.

"Chepa, *insewa*."

She looked at him and did not speak. He stood a moment, seeing her appear as never before. She was battle-weary, powder-stained, and disheartened, yet she retained a dogged, unquenchable defiance.

Teta turned to the three men. "We will keep watch here for a while. You may go down to the ledge and eat."

The men went away. Teta walked to Chepa and put his arm around her. She all but collapsed, leaning against him, enjoying the luxury of weariness which enveloped her. He picked her up and carried her behind the wall, where he put her down. He sat beside her and placed her head on his shoulder.

"Did you get the two?" he asked.

"Yes, my vow is fulfilled."

"Did it make you happy to mark number two hundred?"

"No. It was rather the opposite; for such a long time I have driven myself toward this achievement, and now I feel spent."

"You will not have to drive yourself any more."

"Teta?"

"Yes, *insewa*."

"I killed Colonel Ramos."

"It was necessary. Do not think of it."

"I had to do it, Teta. I think the Good God arranged it."

"It is done. Let us talk of other things."

"He was a brave man. He came farther up the Hill than anyone. When the others were hunting cover, he was standing, shouting for the men to come on. If there had been others like him, they would have taken the ledge. I had to kill him."

"That is how it goes. Colonel Ramos, the best friend the Yaquis had in the Mexican Army, is killed by us. General Peña, who grows rich by cheating and swindling the Yaquis, stays safely in the background and will live to cheat and swindle again. General Caumea, a great and good man is murdered; Pluma Villa, the traitor, will receive honors and rewards. The Peñas and Villas are perpetuated to connive and plot and rob. That is the way it has always been."

"But there are still Yaquis who are trying to change it," said Chepa.

"And there will be tomorrow, and next week, and next year."

"Teta, what do you think tomorrow will bring for us?"

"Let us not talk of it."

"We cannot step aside from that which is to come," Chepa said firmly.

"Nothing but a miracle can save us. We might withstand one more assault, but after that we will have neither the men nor the ammunition to resist another."

"Do you think we may get help from the mountain Yaquis?"

"If we can hold out past tomorrow, it is possible. It will

take that long for them to assemble and organize. That is assuming they are trying to do so."

"The General has probably thought of that possibility, too," said Chepa.

"Insewa, would you do something for me?"

"Why do you ask?"

"You carry our little José Gloria beneath your heart. Perhaps we could save him if you would slip away when the moon goes down. You could go down the west side of the ridge and have an even chance of getting through the Mexican lines."

Bitterness crept into her voice.

"Save him? For what? To have his head bashed in, or to be caught, some day, on a hill like this?"

"Would it not be worth it, if he could live as long as we? Have we not retaliated again and again for the wrongs inflicted on our people? Have we not experienced Glory together these last few months? That which has been ours has been given to few."

"Yes, to very few." Sadness filled her eyes. "But without you, life would have no plan or purpose. If you cannot come with me, I will stay with you."

"We both know I cannot leave."

"That is true, and I will not go. Our child will die in the warm security of his mother's body. There will be no Rancho Pimas or Rancho Prieta, no servitude on some *hacendado's* ranch, no filthy, suffocating sea voyage to Yucatan, no days and weeks without food or shelter, while being hunted. He will know none of the anxiety which comes from having a price on his head; no, our child shall not endure that. He will go to Glory with you and me."

Teta had no answer. He gathered her to him. Never had

he felt so powerless. Waves of helpless fury and grief shook him until he trembled. Deep within her, Chepa responded to the pain and suffering which enveloped him. Her arms tightened around him, and their anguish was transmitted from one to the other and back again; they were one, now, in their despair as they had been in their moments of glory.

How long they clung to each other they did not know. She was the first to regain composure. Her hand went up to his face; her fingers found and gently caressed the scar. She mothered him as she would have a child, stroking his hair and face. He looked up into her compassionate eyes. Suddenly she smiled, and the dimple played on her cheek.

His voice returned. "*Insewa*, I have never seen you more beautiful than you are at this moment."

"If that is true, I am reflecting what you have given to me."

"Men only fool themselves when they claim superior courage. Woman is the stronger. I started in to comfort you, and now you are consoling me."

"*Inpale*, do you not know there is no end for a love like ours? We have been to the Gates of Glory, and before this day is over we will go through them, and little José Gloria will go with us."

"You make it sound attractive and desirable."

"It will be."

Teta raised up and looked about him.

"Do you realize the moon has long been down and day is coming?"

"I had not noticed."

"I wonder what new mischief the General has been contriving since darkness came?"

"It is not important now."

"It might be, if we can hold out another day," said Teta.

"The General will see that we do not."

"You should take some rest."

"I do not need it now. All the weariness is gone, and I am ready for what the day may bring."

A commotion was heard on the ledge below. There was much talking, a multiplicity of voices, many people asking questions at the same time.

"What can that be?" asked Teta.

Both listened, but could make nothing of it.

"If it were urgent, someone would call up to us," said Chepa.

In a few moments they heard footsteps coming up the slope from below.

"Teta?" said Primero's voice.

"Yes, Primero."

"Here is Nacho."

"Nacho! How did he get here?"

"It is impossible to believe, but he is here."

Teta rose and walked toward them, and there was Nacho, grinning and holding out his hand.

"How can it be that you are here?" asked Teta.

"I told you that when you had something big on foot I would be back." Nacho had lost none of his gay swagger.

"Good for you, Nacho, but how did you get here?"

"We returned from our raid yesterday afternoon. When we got up on the Mesa de Chichibobuaje, we heard rifle fire and came over the edge to investigate. Then we saw what was happening. I had a pair of shoes I had taken from a dead Mexican soldier. I told Jesús Matus I would put them on and walk through the Mexican lines after it



was dark, posing as a *yoricoyote*. It worked. They paid little attention to me. My big worry was how to get up here without being shot by the Yaquis."

"How did you?"

"I remembered a very steep trail up the cliff over there. I climbed up it and came down on the ledge from behind."

"Tell us about Jesús Matus. How did he get back to the mountains?"

"Across the Valley of Agua Caliente, between Arenas and Pitayita, and through the Pass of San José."

"You did not have opposition?"

"We did not see a Mexican. They were all down here trying to get you. Jesús Matus suspected you had fallen into the trap the Mexicans had set for us."

"Where is Matus now?"

"He has gone to collect the other bands."

"How long will it take?"

"All day. At daybreak in the morning he will strike through the Pass of Bacatete, and will drive the Mexican troops back far enough for us to charge down the north part of the slope and join them. Then we will retreat back through the Pass."

"You give us hope, Nacho. If we can only beat them off for one more day."

"That we can do," said Nacho with assurance.

"Do you hear that, Chepa?" Teta asked.

"I heard."

"There is hope."

"We will do our best to hold them off," said Primero. Day was beginning to break.

"I have never known such a short night," said Teta.

"I have never lived through such a long one," said Primero.

"I know, Primero. Circumstances make a difference."

As visibility increased, everyone on the ledge and the summit who could walk was straining his eyes across the battleground of the day before to see what new position or plan the Mexicans had worked out. No change was apparent except that the dead and the wounded had been carried away.

"I do not understand. I expected another embankment much farther up the slope. It would have made for less exposure when they charged," said Primero.

"Nor am I able to understand it," said Teta.

Primero and Nacho went back down to the ledge.

"Can you make anything of it?" Teta asked, turning to Chepa.

"No, the very fact that the General has done nothing during the night probably means he has a surprise for us," she said.

"Do you not feel better since Nacho came?"

"Teta, if something happens to me today before it happens to you, will you stay with me? José Gloria and I want to be near to you at that moment."

"Nonsense, *insewa*, we are going to last the day, and by this time tomorrow we will be safely back in the mountains."

He kissed her, but there was a catch in his breath.

"You promise not to leave me?"

"I will not be out of your sight this day."



## CHAPTER 25

THE arrival of Nacho with news that Matus would attack the Mexican troops in the Pass the next morning filled the men with new hope and optimism. The strain and weariness of two days and nights were forgotten. Nacho's appearance was good medicine which affected their minds and muscles. The day before, they had faced the enemy with solemn, tenacious obstinacy, and unyielding determination. This morning, bouyancy and confidence prevailed.

Before it was light, several of them had climbed the higher summit and brought down a quantity of the jerky. The sun and heat of the day before had cured the surfaces of the thinner strips and, although rare on the inside, they were edible and nutritious. The day before, the men had given little thought to food; today they ate with relish.

Every man assumed the Mexicans would attempt new assaults during the day, and busied himself with preparation. Each cleaned his rifle, carefully inspected his ammunition, and placed it so he could reach it quickly and with-

out lost motion. The guns of the dead and wounded were cleaned, loaded, and placed at intervals along the wall; their ammunition was divided among those whose rifles it would fit.

The men made jokes with one another. The knowledge that twelve of their number would not be in their places at the wall was offset by the feeling that each remaining man would shoot twice as fast. All they had to do was beat off today's attacks; tomorrow they would be out of this trap.

Chepa moved among the men calmly. The gray grimness of the previous day was gone. She cleaned her rifle and carefully inspected her six remaining cartridges. Then she took the flint point from the pouch attached to one of her cartridge belts and made nineteen new dots on the stock. One of the dots was much larger than the others. She ate a strip of jerky, though not with the same enjoyment as the men.

The sun rose higher, and still there was no sign of offensive activity among the Mexican troops. The smoke from many campfires rose lazily in the background. The fires were not needed for heat, the sweltering sun was already beating with unrelenting intensity. It was evident the troops were leisurely cooking their breakfast.

Each hour the Mexicans were inactive was an hour gained by the men on the ledge. The outlook seemed more reassuring to the men, but the apparent lethargy of the enemy was increasingly a source of worry and vexation to Teta. There was something afoot, and he could not make out what it was. As the morning wore on, he became more uneasy and restless. He repeatedly studied the loitering Mexican troops through the field glasses, hoping to see some activity which would reveal their intentions. Then

he would scan the horizon from north to south, to see if there was evidence of the approach of reinforcements for the enemy. His mounting anxiety contrasted more and more with the unconcern of Chepa. She scarcely glanced at the Mexican lines. Her only visible concern was Teta. She moved back and forth casually, always keeping him in sight. When he glanced her way, she gave him a look of loving assurance.

It was midday when Anastacio called out from the parapet on the summit.

"There is dust on the road to Torocobampo."

Teta could not see it from the ledge, and ran up to the summit. He was not sure whether it was dust or an illusion until he trained the field glasses on the spot. There was no doubt of it then. Intently he watched the small mistlike cloud as it came nearer and grew larger.

"It is probably another cavalry unit," Chepa said, coming to stand beside him.

He glanced quickly at her, and the hardness of his face softened when he saw the warmth in her eyes.

"It would be a relief to know that it is only a troop of cavalry."

He studied the approaching cloud of dust again.

"The party is moving fast. It must be coming at a gallop."

By this time the Mexicans were aware of the approaching detachment.

A bustle of activity began among them. The soldiers got their rifles and assembled in formations.

"Whatever is coming, it is the thing they have been waiting for," said Teta.

The dust cloud was not more than two miles away, and Teta thought it was unusually dense for its size. All the

men on the ledge were watching, but as yet none considered it important.

The detachment was half a mile away now. In dim outline could be seen, in the lead, what appeared to be two wagons, each pulled by three teams of horses. What seemed most unusual was that each team had a rider on the left-hand horse.

"They must be rushing in more ammunition," said Teta.

"It is possible, they used much of it yesterday," Chepa said.

"I do not know how they can drive so fast on a hot day like this."

"They changed horses at San Juanico, Coyote, and Torocobampo," said Chepa.

The column reached the troop concentration at the foot of the Hill, swung broadwise with a flourish, and halted. The dust began to clear, revealing two pieces of light field artillery with ammunition caissons. Behind were forty mounted artillerymen.

An instant change came over the faces of the men on the ledge and the summit. Intrepid confidence became stolid, bleak defiance. Teta continued to study the cavalcade through the field glasses. The horses were wet, jaded, and gaunt. General Peña was inspecting the cannon. One of the pieces was pulled around and stopped with its muzzle pointing toward the Hill. The other made a circle and started south. Teta was at a loss as to what it meant. The purpose became evident, however, when the drivers, followed by half of the mounted artillerymen, turned into the gap between the Hill of the Rooster and Zamahaca.

"That one will be used to sweep the ledge on the other side," he said.

"It is well. That will make it quicker," said Chepa.

The caisson was unlimbered from the cannon to the east of the Hill. The members of the crew took their positions. The barrel was swabbed out, the mechanism checked. The troops were in formation on either side of the cannon. The General was standing near the field piece, looking at his watch. He nodded to the officer in charge of the cannon. Smoke belched from its muzzle; an instant later a shell screamed overhead, passing between the two summits. In another moment a shell from the piece in the gap swished overhead from the southwest. A second shell from the east hit the cliff below the ledge. Fragments of shrapnel flew upward and outward, but no one on the ledge was struck. The next shell from the gap made a direct hit on top of the smaller summit.

The men on the ledge crouched behind the wall. There was nowhere else to go. The ledge on the other side did not have a wall. Teta, one arm around Chepa, watched the Mexicans load the cannon for the next shot. When all was ready, the officer brought his arm down. Smoke belched, the shell struck the side of the smaller summit, and shrapnel swept the ledge.

Chepa collapsed, and only Teta's arm prevented her falling. He laid her on the ledge, holding her shoulders and head in his arms. In her left chest was a gaping hole; part of the breast had been blown away, and blood poured from the wound to soak both Chepa and Teta, but they were unaware of it. She opened her eyes and smiled feebly.

"Do not worry, *inpale*. There is no pain."

Neither she nor Teta knew that a smaller shell fragment had knifed into her spinal column, killing all nerve sensation, but leaving her conscious. Teta felt her slipping away, and called to her frantically. Her eyes had been

closed; she opened them now with great effort. In a barely audible whisper she said, "The Gates of Glory are open, José Gloria and I will wait for you."

Her life slipped away so quietly he did not know when it left. Another shell hit the summit, and a large fragment struck Teta's right thigh; everything went black. When he regained consciousness, he was lying with his head on Chepa's shoulder. Terrific pains radiated from his wound; he could not move his leg, and realized the bone was shattered. He raised himself to look at Chepa and knew she was dead. It seemed impossible she could look so at peace in the hell that was developing on the Hill.

"Until I see you, *insewa*," he whispered.

He glanced quickly up and down the ledge and saw that not a man remained unhit. Many were dead; others, desperately wounded, were in great agony. A few, like himself, had only flesh wounds or broken bones.

Another explosion, and Teta joined Chepa.

The bombardment continued much longer than was necessary. The General had many shells, and he used them all. Then he ordered the troops to storm the Hill. As they ascended, not a shot was fired from above. When they poured over the ledge, they found only torn and mangled bodies. Just one *golpe de gracia* had to be administered.

When it was evident that no resistance was forthcoming, and that there was no danger involved, General Peña and Pluma Villa hurried to the top of the Hill. On the ledge, they surveyed the carnage with satisfaction.

Pluma Villa moved about among the dead, turning over those who were on their faces to see how many he knew.

"Here is a woman," he said to General Peña as he took a ring with a green stone from her outstretched hand.

The General came and looked down as Pluma Villa rolled Teta's body over.

"This," said Pluma Villa, "is the man who came back from Yucatan. He was at the conference at Oroz and sat on the platform."

"The woman, then, must be Chepa. Have you seen her?"

"No," said Pluma Villa, startled.

"There is a five-thousand-peso reward for her. We had better take her head as proof."

Colonel Borrego came up. "General, what shall we do with the bodies?"

"Leave them where they are."

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